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IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

CALPINE ENERGY SERVICES, L.P.,
AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER SERVICE CORP.
AND
ALLEGHENY ENERGY SUPPLY CO., LLC,
Petitioners,

v.

PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 1 OF SNOHOMISH COUNTY
WASHINGTON, *et al.*, and
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION,
Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

APPENDIX TO PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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APPENDIX A

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS,
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 1 OF SNOHOMISH COUNTY WASHINGTON, *Petitioner*,
Reliant Energy Services Inc., *Intervenor*,
v.
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION, *Respondent*.
Southern California Water Company, *Petitioner*,
Enron Power Marketing Inc., *Intervenor*,
v.
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Respondent.
Attorney General, State of Nevada, *Petitioner*,
BP Energy Company;
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P., *Intervenors*,
v.
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Respondent*.
Nevada Power Company; Sierra Pacific Power Company, *Petitioners*,
v.
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Respondent*.
Public Utility District No. 1
of Snohomish County Washington, *Petitioner*,
Calpine Energy Services, L.P.;
El Paso Merchant Energy L.P.;
Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc.;
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, LP;
BP Energy Co.; Allegheny Energy Supply Co., LLC;
American Electric Power Service Corporation, *Intervenors*,
v.
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Respondent.

Nos. 03-72511, 03-74757, 04-70712, 03-74617, 03-74208.

Argued and Submitted Dec. 8, 2004.
Filed Dec. 19, 2006.

On Petition for Review of an Order of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.
FERC Nos. EL02-26 et al., EL-02-28,
EL02-28-004, EL02-26-000.

Before: BROWNING, PREGERSON, and BERZON, Circuit Judges.

BERZON, Circuit Judge:

The energy crisis in 2000-2001 resulted in extreme power shortages and price volatility in California and other western states. This consolidated appeal raises several interrelated issues concerning a series of wholesale energy contracts for future energy supplies--known as "forward" contracts--entered into by power companies in California, Nevada, and Washington during the energy crisis. Petitioners, including retail power companies and state agencies[1], contended before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that the contracts should be modified, but FERC concluded that they should not be.

Petitioners (the "local utilities") now allege that FERC, in so deciding, did not appropriately apply the just and reasonable standard set by section 206(a) of the Federal Power Act (FPA).[2] They allege that FERC erred in applying

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[1] Petitioners are Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County, Washington (Snohomish); Southern California Water Company (Southern Cal Water); Nevada Power Company (Nevada Power); and Sierra Pacific Power Company (Sierra Pacific); and the Office of the Nevada Attorney General, Bureau of Consumer Protection.

[2] Although the statute was amended slightly in 2005, this opinion exclusively refers to, and quotes from, the 2000 version. Section 206(a)

the *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest" mode of review[3] to contracts that were (1) not subject to meaningful initial review or approval, and (2) formed during one of the most erratic and bizarre periods of activity for the western energy market.

We hold that FERC erred both in its procedural reliance on *Mobile-Sierra*[4] and in the substantive standard it used in determining that the contracts at issue did not affect the public interest. FERC's reliance on *Mobile-Sierra* was misplaced because its grant of market-based rate authority lacked a mechanism to provide effective, timely relief from unjust and unreasonable rates due to market dysfunction, thereby creating a gap in the FPA's protection against excessive energy prices. Although we would remand to FERC solely because its application of *Mobile-Sierra* was

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provided:

> Whenever the Commission, after a hearing had upon its own motion or upon complaint, shall find that any rate, charge, or classification, demanded, observed, charged, or collected by any public utility for any transmission or sale subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, or that any rule, regulation, practice, or contract affecting such rate, charge, or classification is *unjust, unreasonable,* unduly discriminatory or preferential, the Commission shall determine the *just and reasonable* rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract to be thereafter observed and in force, and shall fix the same by order.

16 U.S.C. § 824e(a) (2000) (emphasis added). Notably, this provision expressly applied to "any ... *contract,*" as well as to rates unilaterally set.

[3] This shorthand takes its name from two Supreme Court cases decided on the same day, *United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Service Corp.* (*Mobile*), 350 U.S. 332 (1956), and *Federal Power Commission v. Sierra Pacific Power Co.* (*Sierra*), 350 U.S. 348 (1956).

[4] We use the term "*Mobile-Sierra* " throughout this opinion to refer both to the two original Supreme Court cases and to the doctrine derived from them.

therefore procedurally improper, we further hold that the agency's finding that the challenged contracts do not affect the public interest was based on a substantively erroneous mode of analysis. A remand is therefore necessary to allow FERC the opportunity to review these complaints in the first instance in light of these holdings and determine whether the challenged rates meet the statutory standard.

I. The Federal Power Act and Mobile-Sierra

The FPA governs the actions of public utilities, defined as "any person who owns or operates facilities subject to the jurisdiction of the [Federal Energy Regulatory] Commission." 16 U.S.C. § 824(e). The Commission's jurisdiction covers the "transmission of electric energy in interstate commerce and the sale of such energy at wholesale in interstate commerce." *Id.* § 824(a). This definition encompasses activities carried out by all of the Intervenor-Respondent companies.

The FPA requires FERC to regulate public utilities for the benefit of consumers. *See Pa. Water & Power Co. v. Fed. Power Comm'n*, 343 U.S. 414, 418 (1952) ("A major purpose of the whole [Federal Power] Act is to protect power consumers against excessive prices."); *California ex rel. Lockyer v. FERC* (*Lockyer*), 383 F.3d 1006, 1017 (9th Cir. 2004) (describing "protecting consumers" as the FPA's "primary purpose"); *see also Atl. Ref. Co. v. Pub. Serv. Comm'n*, 360 U.S. 378, 388 (1959) ("The [Natural Gas] Act was so framed as to afford consumers a complete, permanent and effective bond of protection from excessive rates and charges.").

Two FPA provisions, sections 205 and 206, 16 U.S.C. §§ 824d, 824e, govern FERC's authority and establish its obligation to regulate rates for the interstate sale and transmission of electricity. Through these provisions, the

FPA empowers FERC to regulate wholesale electricity rates but *not* the rates charged directly to consumers by local utilities. *See* 16 U.S.C. § 824(a), (b)(1). The protection the FPA accords consumers is therefore indirect: By assuring that wholesale purveyors of electric power charge fair rates to retailers, the FPA protects against the need to pass excessive rates on to consumers. At the same time, by assuring that wholesale purveyors of electric power receive a fair rate of return, the FPA assures that such sellers have the incentive to continue to produce and supply power.

The First Circuit has aptly described the interaction of sections 205 and 206:

> In regulating electricity rates, the Federal Power Act follows (with variations) a well-developed model: the utility sets the rates in the first instance, 16 U.S.C. § 824d(a), subject to a basic statutory obligation that rates be just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory or preferential, *id.* §§ 824d(a)-(b). FERC, which inherited the powers of its predecessor (the Federal Power Commission), can investigate a newly filed rate (section 205, *id.* § 824d(e)), or an existing rate (section 206, *id.* § 824e(a)), and, if the rate is inconsistent with the statutory standard, order a change in the rate to make it conform to that standard, *id.* §§ 824d(e), 824e(a)-(b).
>
> The procedural incidents and FERC's ability to provide refunds vary depending on whether the proceeding is one to investigate a new rate filing or an existing rate. For example, in the former case, the burden is on the utility to show that its rate is lawful, 16 U.S.C. § 824d(e), and, in the latter, the burden is on the FERC staff or the customer to show that the rate is unlawful, *id.* § 824e(b). In both circumstances, however, the statutory test of lawfulness is phrased in

the same terms.

Boston Edison Co. v. FERC, 233 F.3d 60, 64 (1st Cir. 2000) (footnote omitted). Additionally, when utilities set rates in the first instance, they may do so via privately-negotiated contracts, filed pursuant to section 205(c)- (d), 16 U.S.C. § 824d(c)-(d).[5] Thus, the FPA, by its terms, creates a role for privately negotiated wholesale power contracts, balanced by FERC's obligation to ensure that those contracts rates, like unilaterally filed rates, are "just and reasonable."

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[5] Section 205(c)-(d), 16 U.S.C. § 824d(c)-(d), provides:

(c) ***Schedules***

Under such rules and regulations as the Commission may prescribe, every public utility shall file with the Commission, within such time and in such form as the Commission may designate, and shall keep open in convenient form and place for public inspection schedules showing all rates and charges for any transmission or sale subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, and the classifications, practices, and regulations affecting such rates and charges, *together with all contracts which in any manner affect or relate to such rates, charges, classifications, and services.*

(d) ***Notice required for rate changes***

Unless the Commission otherwise orders, no change shall be made by any public utility in any such rate, charge, classification, or service, or in any rule, regulation, or *contract* relating thereto, except after sixty days' notice to the Commission and to the public. Such notice shall be given by filing with the Commission and keeping open for public inspection new schedules stating plainly the change or changes to be made in the schedule or schedules then in force and the time when the change or changes will go into effect. The Commission, for good cause shown, may allow changes to take effect without requiring the sixty days' notice herein provided for by an order specifying the changes so to be made and the time when they shall take effect and the manner in which they shall be filed and published. (Emphases added).

Two Supreme Court decisions, announced on the same day in 1956, explain the approach that federal regulators must apply in certain circumstances when reviewing challenges maintaining that contracted rates are too low to be just and reasonable. *See United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Serv. Corp.* (*Mobile*), 350 U.S. 332 (1956);[6] *Fed. Power Comm'n v. Sierra Pac. Power Co.* (*Sierra*), 350 U.S. 348 (1956). These decisions explain how, in the context of the energy industry as it existed in 1956, FERC was to ensure that wholesale contracts were "just and reasonable."

In *Mobile,* a seller agreed to a long-term fixed rate contract with another business, and the agency accepted it for filing under section 205. The Court held that the seller could not unilaterally increase a contracted rate by filing a new rate under section 205(d), reasoning that the statute "evinces no purpose to abrogate private rate contracts," *Mobile,* 350 U.S. at 338, and recognizing the need for "individualized arrangements" between suppliers and distributors, *id.* at 339. The Court emphasized that the public is served by the negotiation and enforcement of private contracts: "By preserving the integrity of contracts, [the Natural Gas Act] permits the stability of supply arrangements which all agree is essential to the health of the ... industry." *Id.* at 344. At the same time, the Court made clear that while "permit[ting] the relations between the parties to be established initially by contract," the Natural Gas Act provided for "the protection of the public interest ... by supervision of the individual contracts, which to that end must be filed with the Commission and made public." *Id.* at

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[6] *Mobile* related to the Natural Gas Act, and so did not involve a FPA claim. The Supreme Court, however, referred in *Mobile* to "the virtually identical provisions of the Federal Power Act," 350 U.S. at 346, and the doctrine derived from *Mobile* always has been understood to be fully applicable to FPA section 206(a) cases.

339.

Sierra took up where *Mobile* left off, echoing the principle that a unilateral filing of a new rate cannot supersede a contract rate, even if the new rate is just and reasonable. *Sierra,* 350 U.S. at 352-53. The Court then extended *Mobile* to section 206 cases, holding that when a public utility agrees "by contract to a rate affording *less than a fair return,*" then the "sole concern" of the Federal Power Commission (FERC's predecessor) in section 206(a) review is "whether the rate is *so low* as to adversely affect the public interest." *Id.* at 355 (emphases added). As the emphasized language indicates, *Sierra* dealt only with whether a challenged contract rate was too low to serve the public interest. It did not deal with a contract rate alleged to be too high. In these low-rate cases, the Court declared, "the purpose of the power given the Commission by § 206(a) is the protection of the public interest, as distinguished from the private interests of the utilities," as "a contract may not be said to be either '*unjust*' or '*unreasonable*' simply because it is unprofitable to the public utility." *Id.* (emphasis added).

Sierra thus did not purport to abandon the "just and reasonable" standard in the statute. Rather, it gave substance to that standard in circumstances in which the contention is that the seller of energy finds a long-term contract it entered into no longer profitable. Relying on section 201 of the FPA and reciting that "the scheme of regulation imposed by [the FPA] is necessary in the public interest," the Court held that when a seller seeks to raise rates after a contract has gone into effect, only "public interest" factors are pertinent to the "just and reasonable" inquiry, including whether the rate "might impair the financial ability of the public utility to continue its service, cast upon other consumers an excessive burden, or be unduly discriminatory." *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted).

Mobile-Sierra, then, stands for the proposition that *in certain circumstances*, a presumption applies that private parties to a wholesale electric power contract have negotiated a "just and reasonable" contract over a designated period of time, lawful under the FPA throughout that period.[7] That presumption can be rebutted by establishing that the contract adversely affects the public interest--that is, the interests of the consuming public that the FPA protects.[8]

As we explain in Part II of this opinion, *Mobile* and *Sierra* arose in a regulatory context in which there was an opportunity for traditional cost-based just and reasonable review before the energy contracts at issue became effective. The regulatory regime evolved, however, and FERC shifted its inquiry from the permissible cost-basis of rates to the determination of a seller's market power. We therefore confront here, for the first time, the intersection of *two* doctrines--one, the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine, the product of the courts; the other, market-based rate authorization, the product of recent agency policy--as they affect the application of the just and reasonable standard. No case that

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[7] The parties and some of the cases speak as if two alternative standards for reviewing wholesale electricity rates exist--the statutory "just and reasonable" standard and the *Mobile-Sierra* public interest standard. We do not find this way of viewing the statutory terrain useful. The FPA establishes a single, albeit general, standard for FERC's adjudication of contract challenges like the present one: whether the challenged contract is "just and reasonable." 16 U.S.C. § 824e(a). The question therefore cannot be not whether the *Mobile-Sierra or* the "just and reasonable" standard of review applies. Instead, we understand *Mobile-Sierra* to establish presumptions regarding whether certain electricity contracts meet the statutory standard, and hold that lack of profitability alone is not a basis for deeming a contract unreasonable when the seller has agreed to the rate that proves unprofitable.

[8] As already noted, the specific factors mentioned in *Sierra* as rebutting this presumption apply to cases challenging a contract rate for being too low. *Mobile* and *Sierra* had no occasion to determine what factors must be shown in other situations.

we have found concerns the intersection of these two doctrines.

While the object of the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine was an individual contract, the market-based rate authorization inquiry applies to an individual seller, with regard to any covered contract for electrical energy it enters into. The former inquiry occurred contemporaneously with a contract's formation, while the latter inquiry transpires before each contract is formed. This dual shift distinguishes the regulatory context here from that present in *Mobile* and *Sierra* in two material respects: (1) the *timing* of the agency's initial review has moved to a point *before* contract formation, and (2) the *substance* of that review no longer focuses on the *terms of the contract.* In other words, since *Mobile* and *Sierra* were decided, both the questions that FERC asks in its initial regulatory review of rates and when it asks them have changed.

Although this regulatory evolution does not render *Mobile-Sierra* a dead letter, it reinforces the need to delineate carefully the prerequisites for its application in the present environment. Our principal question is therefore whether the circumstances that trigger the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption are present in this case. As we explain in Part IV of this opinion, we conclude from the context of *Mobile-Sierra* and from later cases that three prerequisites are necessary to establish the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption: (1) the contract by its own terms must not preclude the limited *Mobile-Sierra* review; (2) the regulatory scheme in which the contracts are formed must provide FERC with an opportunity for effective, timely review of the contracted rates; and (3) where, as here, FERC is relying on a market-based rate-setting system to produce just and reasonable rates, this review must permit consideration of all factors relevant to the propriety of the contract's formation.

Taken together, the satisfaction of these three conditions justifies a presumption that parties have negotiated a contract that is just and reasonable between them and therefore triggers the *Mobile-Sierra* public interest mode of review, adjusted to account for the circumstance in which it is the buyer rather than the seller that is challenging the existing contract. When the prerequisites have not been met, however, the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption cannot apply, and FERC must find another method of evaluating whether the challenged rates are just and reasonable.

To explain the origins of these *Mobile-Sierra* prerequisites and illuminate the current role of the doctrine, we begin by considering the historical and regulatory context in which *Mobile-Sierra* developed and the changes in that context since those cases were decided. We then turn to the facts and proceedings underlying the current dispute and, finally, to the derivation and application of the *Mobile-Sierra* prerequisites and standards.

II. Evolution of Power Utility Regulation

A. Early Regulation of Utility Monopolies

Congress passed the Federal Power Act in 1920, establishing the statutory framework described above. Ch. 285, 41 Stat. 1063 (1920). This framework emerged from a wider body of state and federal regulation that revolved around the by-then "familiar mandate" that rates in various industries be "just and reasonable." *Verizon Commc'ns Inc. v. FCC*, 535 U.S. 467, 477 (2002).[9] Before Congress had

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[9] *Verizon* concerned the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which is not relevant to the present case. *Verizon* did, however, include a broader historical discussion of utility regulation, *see* 535 U.S. at 477-89, that directly relates to energy regulation.

passed many laws regulating national industries, state legislatures created specialized agencies "to set and regulate rates." *Id.* In the electric power industry, this effort began in the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1914, forty-five states had enacted electricity regulation laws. Richard F. Hirsh, *Power Loss: The Origins of Deregulation and Restructuring in the American Electric Utility System* 19-26 (1999).

The national government's first substantial foray into rate regulation occurred in 1887, with the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act. Ch. 104, 24 Stat. 379 (1887). This statute, primarily concerned with interstate railroad rates, formed "the model for subsequent federal public-utility statutes like the Federal Power Act." *Verizon,* 535 U.S. at 478. Under the Interstate Commerce Act, railroad carriers would first propose rate schedules, termed "tariffs." Then, interested parties could comment to the agency, which would accept the tariff so long as it was "just and reasonable." *Id.* at 478.

The states and Congress applied this structure to the electric power industry on the basis of two widely-shared assumptions:

First, policymakers assumed that public utilities were "natural monopolies" because, among other reasons, it would be inefficient for competing utilities to string parallel power lines. Timothy P. Duane, *Regulation's Rationale: Learning from the California Energy Crisis,* 19 Yale J. On Reg. 471, 476-77 (2002). Also, utilities could benefit from economies of scale, making a monopoly more efficient than a competitive market. *See* Hirsh, *supra,* at 17-18.

Second, these monopolies, like any monopoly, would be tempted to abuse their market power. Moreover, because electricity cannot be stored, it needed to be produced at the

same time consumers demanded it. Shortages anywhere on an interconnected electricity grid could threaten the entire system. The factors unique to the electric power industry made it particularly susceptible to abuse of market power: A local utility could withhold power, demand higher rates, and credibly threaten to disrupt a regional or national market. Regulation would keep local utilities in check. Duane, *supra*, at 477-78.

Early state and federal agencies created two categories of regulated rates: "retail rates charged directly to the public and wholesale rates charged among businesses involved in providing" the regulated good or service. *Verizon*, 535 U.S. at 478. Under the FPA, the federal government regulates only interstate wholesale electric power sales and interstate electric power transmission, leaving to the states the regulation of rates charged to consumers. *See* 16 U.S.C. § 824(a), (b)(1). State and local governments, therefore, generally focused on rates "as between businesses and the public," while the federal government regulated rates "as between businesses." *Verizon*, 535 U.S. at 479.

As a result of these differences in their regulatory focus, important differences in methodology developed between federal and state energy rate regulation. Knowing that state regulators focused on rates charged directly to the public and following Congress's "acknowledg[ment] that contracts between commercial buyers and sellers could be used in rate-setting," *id.* (citing section 205(d) and *Mobile*, 350 U.S. at 338-39, the Federal Power Commission (FPC) and, later, FERC--both bound by *Mobile-Sierra*--became less inclined to step in and alter filed rates charged among businesses in the energy industry. Even if those agencies wanted to change contract rates, courts, applying *Mobile-Sierra*, would generally assume that those rates were just and reasonable and would probably not harm the public interest.

The underlying assumption was that "[i]n wholesale markets, the party charging the rate and the party charged were often sophisticated businesses enjoying presumptively equal bargaining power, who could be expected to negotiate a 'just and reasonable' rate as between the two of them." *Id.* The equal market power of those businesses and the role of state regulation of rates charged to consumers allowed the federal government to set a relatively high bar for proving that a wholesale contract was unjust or unreasonable based on impact on the public. Federal agencies, including the FPC and its successor agency FERC, thus saw their "principal regulatory responsibility" as preventing discrimination "by favorable contract rates between allied businesses" as compared to other businesses. *Id.* At the same time, *Sierra's* admonition that federal regulators *should* reform contracts if that was "necessary in the public interest," *Sierra,* 350 U.S. at 355 (internal quotation mark omitted), confirmed a continuing federal responsibility to review the impact of wholesale contracts on the public, even though the federal government did not directly regulate rates charged to consumers.

In contrast to federal regulators, state regulators "focused more on the demand for 'just and reasonable' rates to the public than on the perils of rate discrimination." *Verizon,* 535 U.S. at 480. In California, for instance, the Public Utilities Commission ensured that rates charged by the state's three primary utilities--Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas & Electric--were just and reasonable to the consuming public. *See* Cal. Const. art. XII, § 6; Duane, *supra,* at 480.

Within this two-tiered regulatory structure, crase law developed an evolving definition of the "just and reasonable" standard. *See Verizon,* 535 U.S. at 481-89. After decades-long debates not relevant here, courts and regulators settled on a system that attempted to match rates to the cost to the

utility of providing the service, including "the cost of prudently invested capital used to provide the service." *Id.* at 485. This "prudent-investor rule" was designed to provide incentives for utilities to invest in necessary capacity-building by allowing them to charge rates that would provide a fair rate of return on those investments while at the same time "protect[ing] ratepayers from supporting excessive capacity, or abandoned, destroyed, or phantom assets." *Id.* at 486. These competing elements of cost of service regulation were intended to "mimic natural incentives in competitive markets." *Id.; see also Farmers Union Cent. Exch., Inc. v. FERC,* 734 F.2d 1486, 1510 (D.C. Cir. 1984). As a result, cost of service regulation would, in theory, lead to the same rates that would exist in a properly functioning unregulated market.

B. Federal and State Regulatory Reform

Our description thus far covers the regulatory landscape through the mid-1990s. Beginning then, the electric power industry saw "complementary initiatives by the FERC and state agencies" to shift from a cost-based rate regulation regime to a market-based regime. Carmen L. Gentile, *The* Mobile-Sierra *Rule: Its Illustrious Past and Uncertain Future,* 21 Energy L.J. 353, 373 (2000).

This move toward energy regulation reform was premised on a new set of widely-shared assumptions:

First, cost-based regulation did not effectively check public utilities' market power. *See Verizon,* 535 U.S. at 486, ("[T]he prudent-investment rule in practice often [was] no match for the capacity of utilities having all the relevant information to manipulate the rate base...."); Promoting Wholesale Competition Through Open Access Non-Discriminatory Transmission Services by Public Utilities; Recovery of Stranded Costs by Public Utilities and Transmitting Utilities, FERC Order 888-A, 62 Fed. Reg.

12,274, 12,275 (Mar. 14, 1997) ("[A]bsent open access, undue discrimination will continue ...."); Hirsh, *supra,* at 33-54 (describing how "[u]tility [m]anagers [g]ain[ed] [d]ominance" within the earlier regulatory scheme). Also, local utilities would often deny competitors access to their transmission networks, protecting their monopoly status within a geographic area. *See Atl. City Elec. Co. v. FERC,* 295 F.3d 1, 4 (D.C. Cir. 2002).

Second, with technological changes, public power utilities no longer needed to be monopolies. Technological innovations now permitted transmission of power over longer distances, allowing consumers to obtain power from beyond the geographic range of their local utility. *See Transmission Access Policy Study Group v. FERC,* 225 F.3d 667, 681 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (per curiam) (upholding FERC's 1996 reform orders), *aff'd sub nom. New York v. FERC,* 535 U.S. 1 (2002).

Third, the newly feasible market competition could drive down wholesale prices and measure the cost of service, including the cost of long-term investments, more accurately than did the previous regulatory regime. Competition, this thesis posits, "at least over the long pull," will lead to prices that "approximate [marginal] cost," including a return on capital sufficient to ensure that companies have financial incentives to provide power. *Interstate Natural Gas Ass'n of Am. v. FERC* (*INGAA*), 285 F.3d 18, 31 (D.C. Cir. 2002).

Based on these assumptions, FERC decided in 1996 to fundamentally reform its regulation of the nation's interstate wholesale electricity markets. FERC's orders implementing this electrical power reform, Orders 888 and 889, required each utility that operates transmission lines to allow any other utility in the interstate energy market to use its transmission lines on the same terms applicable to the

operating utility itself.[10] *Transmission Access*, 225 F.3d at 681-82; *Promoting Wholesale Competition Through Open Access Non-Discriminatory Transmission Services by Public Utilities; Recovery of Stranded Costs by Public Utilities and Transmitting Utilities*, FERC Order No. 888, 61 Fed. Reg. 21,540, 21,541 (May 10, 1996).

Taking advantage of the newly available "open access," utilities would, in theory, have both the market incentives and the legal right to compete with each other. This competition would provide retail consumers with the opportunity to purchase power from a wide variety of producers at relatively lower rates. *Transmission Access*, 225 F.3d at 683. A factory in Albany, California, for example, could, in theory, purchase power from a power plant in Albany, New York, no longer limited in its options to whatever the local utility would sell. Local energy utilities, could, rather than producing their own power to sell to the public, choose between various competing producers and then transfer the expected savings from this competition to the public. FERC estimated that, as a result of such competition, consumers would benefit from annual savings of $3.8 billion to $5.4 billion. Order 888-A, 62 Fed. Reg. at 12,276.

A crucial element of FERC's 1996 "open access" reforms was the connection between "open access" and an "open access" utility's authority to charge whatever rates the market would bear. "[A]pproximately a decade ago,

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[10] According to FERC, open access is the first of "two central components." Order 888-A, 62 Fed. Reg. at 12,276. The second central component of the 1996 Orders is their mechanism for allowing utilities to recover "stranded costs," that is, costs which they incurred under the previous regulatory regime based upon an expectation of repayment that may not occur in newly competitive markets. *Id.*

companies began to file market-based tariffs that did not specify the precise rate to be charged," and instead indicated that they would charge market-based rates. *Lockyer,* 383 F.3d at 1012. FERC would approve those tariffs if the public utility proved that it lacked, or had adequately mitigated, any ability to significantly affect market prices. *La. Energy & Power Auth. v. FERC,* 141 F.3d 364, 365 & n. 1 (D.C. Cir. 1998); *see also Sw. Pub. Serv. Co.,* 72 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,208, at ¶ 61,966 (1995) (summarizing criteria for approving market-based rate tariffs). Such grants of market-based rate authorization were open-ended. *See, e.g., So. Co. Servs., Inc.,* 87 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,214, at ¶ 61,847 n. 3.

FERC's 1990s reforms specified open access as one criteria necessary to demonstrate the lack, or adequate mitigation, of market power. When a public utility implemented an "open access" policy, it demonstrated that it lacked market power regarding "sales from its existing [power generation] capacity" and was thus entitled to market-based rate authority--that is, the ability to charge whatever rates the market would bear--when it sold power over open access transmission grids. *See* Order No. 888, 61 Fed. Reg. at 21,553; *see Lockyer,* 383 F.3d at 1013 (describing FERC's test for granting market-based rate authority as "consist[ing] of a finding that the applicant lacks market power (or has taken sufficient steps to mitigate market power)"); *cf.* Edward Kahn, Electric Utility Planning and Regulation 319 (1991) (describing the *lack* of open access as allowing "market power[to] interfere with market efficiency").

FERC thus based its 1996 reform--and, as this case makes clear, much of its subsequent regulation--on the belief that "open access" would create market forces helping to ensure that no utility could exercise market power when selling wholesale power. *See* Order No. 888, 61 Fed. Reg. at 21,554 ("[I]ncreased competition resulting from open access

transmission may reduce or even eliminate generation-related market power in the short-run market ...."); *id.* at 21,555 ("[T]he Commission expects this Rule to facilitate the development of competitive bulk power markets...."). FERC tempered this expectation by promising to "continue our case-by-case approach" to granting market-based rate authority. *Id.* FERC's "case-by-case approach" includes ensuring that sellers seeking market-based rate authority lack, or have sufficiently mitigated, market power *and* that FERC has a sufficient "means of monitoring the market in which [the seller's] sales will take place." *Entergy Servs., Inc.*, 58 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,234, ¶ 61,753-54 (1992); *see also Lockyer*, 383 F.3d at 1016 (requiring a market-based regime to include "implied enforcement mechanisms sufficient to provide substitute remedies for the obtaining of refunds"); *Transwestern Pipeline Co.*, 43 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,240, at ¶ 61,650 (1988) (requiring a finding that "competition in the relevant markets will operate as a meaningful constraint on the exercise of market power"). Following the *Entergy* approach, FERC also promised to "modify our market rate criteria if and when appropriate," but specified that any such modification would "not upset transactions entered into pursuant to existing market-based rate authority." Order 888, 61 Fed. Reg. at 21,555.

Like FERC, California challenged the monopoly power of electric power utilities. California's efforts to foster competition between utility monopolies had begun after the energy crises of the 1970s. *See* Duane, *supra*, at 482-87. Federal law then allowed a "qualifying small power production facility" to compete in wholesale power markets. *See* Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-617, §§ 201, 210, 92 Stat. 3117, 3134-35, 3144-47 (codified at 16 U.S.C. §§ 796(17)(C), 824a-3). California pursued these new options particularly aggressively so that, by 1991, California received a third of its energy from producers other than the monopolies held by local utilities.

Hirsh, *supra,* at 93. Those producers demonstrated that a utility could efficiently produce power without taking advantage of economies of scale that supposedly made electricity monopolies "natural." Through these reforms and market changes, the monopoly status of local utilities and the methodology of state regulation of monopoly utilities was eroding.

California A.B. 1890, passed in 1996, sought to accelerate this breakup of local utility monopolies by requiring them to divest a substantial amount of their electricity generation facilities. Act of Sept. 23, 1996, ch. 854, 1996 Cal. Legis. Serv. 854 (West). Local utilities also were required to sell power generated by remaining facilities to the California Power Exchange Corporation (CalPX), which was to serve as an auction market for wholesale electricity sales. *Lockyer,* 383 F.3d at 1008-09.[11]

C. Shifting Authority to FERC

When combined with federal preemption law, one crucial result of these energy market regulatory reforms has been "a massive shift in regulatory jurisdiction from the states to the FERC." Gentile, *supra,* at 373. As noted, a "bright line" exists between state and federal jurisdiction, with wholesale power sales--the type of sales at issue in the challenged contracts in this case--falling on the federal side of the line. *Nantahala Power & Light Co. v. Thornburg,* 476 U.S. 953, 966 (1986) (quoting *Fed. Power Comm'n v. S. Cal. Edison Co.,* 376 U.S. 205, 215 (1964)). FERC's jurisdiction to determine the reasonableness of wholesale rates is exclusive. *Miss. Power & Light Co. v. Mississippi ex rel. Moore,* 487 U.S. 354, 371 (1988). Prior to 1996, vertically-

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[11] The details of A.B. 1890 are discussed below.

integrated state monopolies would charge public consumers rates regulated by state entities and would purchase power from interstate utilities at rates regulated by FERC. The 1996 FERC reforms opened up local monopolies to competition among suppliers in the wholesale power market, resulting in a sharp increase in wholesale power sales--subject to FERC's exclusive jurisdiction--as utilities shopped among suppliers. *See* Gentile, *supra,* at 373; *Pub. Util. Dist. No. 1 v. Idacorp Inc.* (*Grays Harbor*), 379 F.3d 641 (9th Cir. 2004). Additionally, state regulatory reform laws, like California's A.B. 1890, resulted in a less active role for state regulators and a more active one for FERC, as the breakup of vertically integrated utilities created the need for many more wholesale transactions. In California, for example, regulators "ceded most of their authority for regulating generator or trader behavior to FERC through A.B. 1890." Duane, *supra,* at 507.

The upshot of these federal and state innovations in electricity regulation is that state regulators, despite their continued authority over rates charged directly to consumers, have much less actual authority over those rates than they did when *Mobile* and *Sierra* were decided. Local utilities now obtain power largely through wholesale contracts subject to FERC's exclusive regulation, rather than through self-generated and self-transmitted power. As a result, state regulators ordinarily must set retail rates with the wholesale rates as an established cost factor. FERC recognized this dynamic when issuing its reform orders, noting that customers will obtain more power delivered via "unbundled" wholesale transactions--in which the generation and transmission are separately traded rather than provided by an integrated local utility monopoly--making "[t]he exercise of our jurisdiction over rates, terms and conditions of unbundled retail transmission ... more important." Order 888-A, 62 Fed. Reg. at 12,279.

Accordingly, while the state and federal regulatory reforms of the 1990s did not end regulation of the electric energy industry, they did begin a new regulatory era. Although state regulators formerly took an extremely active role so as to ensure the just and reasonable retail power rates, FERC has exclusive jurisdiction over the wholesale rates that now drive the electric power market and, as a practical matter, largely determine the rates ultimately charged to the public. These changes profoundly affect this case and require us to ensure that FERC's application of the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine reflects both the historical and regulatory purpose of the doctrine *and* contemporary regulatory reality.

With the history of electric rate regulation thus in mind, we now turn to the facts of the particular contracts at issue and then consider whether FERC applied the correct legal standard to review of these challenged contracts.

III. Factual and Procedural Background

A. The Western Energy Crisis of 2000-2001

This is not the first case, and it will not be the last, that requires this court to address the western energy crisis of 2000-2001, the basic facts of which are outlined elsewhere. *See Pac. Gas & Elec. Co. v. FERC*, 464 F.3d 861, 863-66 (9th Cir. 2006); *Pub. Utils. Comm'n of Cal. v. FERC*, 462 F.3d 1027, 1035-46 (9th Cir. 2006); *Bonneville Power Admin. v. FERC*, 422 F.3d 908, 911-14 (9th Cir. 2005); *Lockyer*, 383 F.3d at 1008-11; *California ex rel. Lockyer v. Dynegy, Inc.*, 375 F.3d 831, 835-36 (9th Cir. 2004), *cert. denied*, 544 U.S. 974 (2005); *S. Cal. Edison Co. v. Lynch*, 307 F.3d 794, 800-01 (9th Cir. 2002); *Duke Energy Trading & Mktg., L.L.C. v. Davis*, 267 F.3d 1042, 1045-46 (9th Cir. 2001); *Cal. Power Exch. Corp. v. FERC (CalPX)*, 245 F.3d

1110, 1114-19 (9th Cir. 2001); *see also* Duane, *supra,* at 511-24; Michael A. Yuffee, *California's Electricity Crisis: How Best To Respond to the "Perfect Storm,"* 22 Energy L.J. 65, 65-84 (2001). Accordingly, we summarize here only those facts most relevant to this case.

As noted, in 1996, the California legislature deregulated the power industry in California through passage of A.B. 1890. The bill froze residential and small commercial consumer retail rates[12] and required that the three largest California investor-owned utilities[13] divest most of their electricity generation facilities. *See CalPX,* 245 F.3d at 1114-15. Additionally, the bill created the CalPX, which operated a single-day auction for day-ahead and day-of trading in wholesale electricity, known as the "spot market." *Id.* at 1114.[14]

In the summer of 1999, CalPX also opened up a "forward market" to facilitate long-term wholesale electricity contracts. *Id.* The California Public Utilities Commission, however, allowed the investor-owned utilities to purchase only a limited amount of electricity from the CalPX forward markets. The great bulk of their load still had to be purchased from the CalPX spot markets. *Id.* at 1115.

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[12] The legislature froze rates at a level utilities expected to be far above rates utilities were likely to have to pay, thus allowing them to recoup "stranded costs" as California's energy market shifted to a new regulatory era. *See* Duane, *supra,* at 501.

[13] The three largest investor-owned utilities were San Diego Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG & E). *CalPX,* 245 F.3d at 1114.

[14] The term "spot market" refers to deals for energy provided over periods generally not exceeding 24 hours and entered into the day of or day prior to delivery. It contrasts with the term "forward market," in which energy is delivered some time beyond 24 hours after the sale.

In the summer of 2000, there was a dramatic spike in the price of wholesale electricity in the spot markets. *Id.* For example, "[t]he CalPX's constrained day-ahead price peaked at $1,099/MWh [megawatts/hour] on June 28, 2000--an astounding 15-fold increase over the pre-restructuring average cost of $74/MWh." *Id.* at 1115 n. 2.

On November 1, 2000, FERC issued an order explaining that, in its view, this dramatic increase was primarily the result of three factors:

First, "competitive market forces played a major role in the run-up of prices through significantly increased power production costs combined with increased demand due to unusually high temperatures and a scarcity of available generation resources throughout the West and California in particular." *San Diego Gas & Elec. Co.,* 93 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,121, at ¶ 61,354, 2000 WL 1637060 (2000).

Second, "[m]any of the market dysfunctions in California and the exposure of California consumers to high prices can be traced directly to an over reliance on spot markets." *Id.* ¶ 61,359. The rules requiring investor-owned utilities to purchase primarily through the spot markets precluded any significant reliance on forward markets. "And other retail suppliers who would have been free to implement appropriate risk management strategies could not be induced to participate in California's market because the low retail rate, frozen at 10 percent below historical levels, thwarted competitive opportunities for new participants to enter the market." *Id.*

Third, FERC suggested that there was the opportunity for abuse of the markets through the exercise of market power, but could not point to specific instances. *Id.* ¶ 61,376. FERC's staff later issued a report concluding that the spot market was dysfunctional, partially due to market

manipulation by sellers; that conclusion is assumed by all parties here. *See* Staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Final Report on Price Manipulation in Western Markets: Fact Finding Investigation of Potential Manipulation of Electric and Natural Gas Prices,* ["Staff Report"] (2003), *available at* www.ferc.gov/legal/maj-ord-reg/land-docs/PART-I-3-26-03.pdf.

California is part of a single integrated electricity market in the West. Its energy problems therefore created a "dysfunctional marketplace both in California and the remainder of the West." *See San Diego Gas & Elec. Co.* (*June 19 Order*), 95 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,418, at ¶ 62,556, 2001 WL 1910052 (June 19, 2001). For example, in the Pacific Northwest, prices have historically averaged approximately $24/MWh. During this period, short term prices spiked to unprecedented levels, peaking at $3,300/ MWh in early December of 2000, and during the summer and fall of 2000 averaged between $200/MWh and $500/MWh. Markets were also marked by unprecedented levels of price volatility. In response to this volatility, between August 2000 and December 19, 2001, FERC issued nearly 75 orders providing for spot market mitigation measures, *see, e.g., id.,* most aimed at reducing the size of the spot market. *San Diego Gas & Elec. Co.,* 97 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,275, at ¶ 62,171 (Dec. 19, d2001).

The order issued on December 15, 2000, is of particular relevance to the issues here. *See San Diego Gas & Elec. Co.* (*December 15 Order*), 93 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,294, 2000 WL 1840337 (Dec. 15, 2000). That order strongly urged investor-owned utilities to move to long-term contracts of two years or more. *Id.,* ¶ 61,993. "To address concerns about potentially unjust and unreasonable rates in the long-term markets," FERC agreed to "monitor prices in those markets" and established a "benchmark" rate of $74/MWh to "use as a reference point in addressing any complaints regarding the

pricing of long-term contracts negotiated over the next year." *Id.* ¶ 61,994-95. In response to the contention that such a shift would only transform the forward market into another strong sellers' market resembling the then-dysfunctional spot market, FERC declared that it would "be vigilant in monitoring the possible exercise of market power" in the forward market. *Id.* ¶ 61,994. FERC's monitoring, the agency promised, would "also provide customers protection by providing early review of as-bid prices that may not be just and reasonable and prompt rate relief for prices that are mitigated." *Id.* ¶ 61,997.

B. Contracts at Issue Here

This consolidated appeal involves three separate sets of contracts, all of which were made pursuant to the Western Systems Power Pool Agreement (Power Pool Agreement), an umbrella agreement that established standardized terms for wholesale energy transactions. All the utilities involved in this case are signatories to that agreement.

1. *Snohomish*

In response to the extreme spike of spot market prices (reaching as high as $3,300/MWh) during December 2000, Snohomish, a public utility for Snohomish County in Washington, determined that it was no longer viable to rely on the spot markets. On December 22, 2000, Snohomish issued a request for proposals to 17 power suppliers, seeking bids for one-to-three year contracts, providing a total of approximately 75-100 megawatts of electricity for 2001.

Snohomish received five bids, but two were unresponsive to Snohomish's needs. Of the three responsive bids, no supplier would offer more than 25 MW, so Snohomish accepted all three bids and negotiated contracts

with each supplier.[15] That year, Snohomish's Board of Commissioners had previously approved an unprecedented thirty-five percent increase in retail rates, allowing for an average contract price of $125/ MWh. Unfortunately, none of the three offers would allow Snohomish to meet this price, and Snohomish chose not to ask its ratepayers for another double-digit rate increase in the same year.

Consequently, Snohomish asked Morgan Stanley--an electrical energy commodities dealer--what term would be necessary to secure a $100/MWh price for its contract; Morgan Stanley demanded a ten-year term. The parties ultimately agreed to a nine-year term at $105/MWh. Additionally, Morgan Stanley required Snohomish to accept credit terms articulated in a contractual provision termed the "Collateral Annex."[16]

Snohomish claims that it suffered losses between January 2001 and March 2002 in excess of $25.7 million and that those losses will escalate over the term of the contract as market rates remain close to traditional levels. FERC specifically found that the Morgan Stanley contracts accounted for an eight percent increase for retail ratepayers over 2001 rates, and other contracts accounted for a fifty-one percent increase. *Nev. Power Co.* (*November 10 Order*), 105 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,185, at ¶ 61,986, 2003 WL 22628184

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[15] One of the three contracts, signed with Enron Corporation, was terminated in November 2001, as Enron's credit deteriorated. Snohomish sought reform of the other contract, with American Electric Power, and the parties settled that case. The remaining contract, here at issue, is with Morgan Stanley Capital Group ("Morgan Stanley").

[16] Among other requirements, the "Collateral Annex" required Snohomish to post, on two days notice, specified collateral. This requirement has required Snohomish to post as much as $101 million in collateral.

(Nov. 10, 2003). Snohomish here challenges the term of the contract and the imposition of the Collateral Annex.

2. *Southern Cal Water*

Southern Cal Water owns and operates an electric utility distribution system that serves approximately 21,600 customers in San Bernadino County, California. Southern Cal Water purchases, subject to regulation by the California Public Utilities Commission, an average electric load of about 16.3 MW.

The A.B. 1890 requirements that investor-owned utilities purchase in the spot market did not apply to Southern Cal Water, which owned no transmission lines and generated no electricity. To avoid relying entirely on the spot markets, which it viewed as significantly risky, Southern Cal Water executed a one-year contract with Illinova in April 1999, providing for purchase of 12 MW of uninterruptible around-the-clock energy at a price of $28/MWh. One year later, Southern Cal Water renewed the contract with Dynegy (Illinova's successor), to run from May 1, 2000, to May 1, 2001, for the same load, at the increased price of $35.50/MWh.

California enacted A.B. 1 on February 1, 2001, allowing the California Department of Water Resources to purchase energy for the then-collapsing large investor-owned utilities and power suppliers. *See* Act of Feb. 1, 2001, 2001 Cal. Legis. Serv. 1st Ex. Sess. 4 (West). At that point, Dynegy informed Southern Cal Water that it was not interested in renewing its contract with Southern Cal Water, because it could sell its entire generation output to the State of California. With the present contract expiring at the end of April 2001, Southern Cal Water engaged in a hurried

bidding process.[17]

On March 7, 2001, Southern Cal Water issued a request for proposals for 15 MW of power to six power companies operating in California and requested bids by March 14, 2001. The company requested bids of one to seven years, without specifying a preferred or maximum price. The three bids submitted ranged from $194.50/MWh for a one-year contract to $84/ MWh for a seven-year contract. After receiving firm offers at higher prices, Southern Cal Water accepted Mirant's offer of $95/MWh for five years, as the offer that best balanced price against contract length. In light of this increase in Southern Cal Water's wholesale electricity costs, the California Public Utilities Commission allowed the company to recover a portion of the costs of the contract, resulting in a weighted average retail rate of $77/MWh.

Southern Cal Water maintains that its ratepayers have seen an overall thirty-eight percent increase in their electric bills. FERC found that there was no rate increase for Southern Cal Water's ratepayers who are permanent residents, and that the other group of Southern Cal Water ratepayers, those with second homes in certain areas, paid an average monthly electric bill of only $35.13. *Order on*

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[17] Noting that, in October 2000, Southern Cal Water rejected an offer by Dynegy to extend its contract on a "blend and extend" basis of between $46.50/MWh to $54.50/MWh depending on the length of the proposed contract, *Order on Rehearing*, 105 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,988 (internal quotation marks omitted), FERC found that Southern Cal Water *chose* to wait until March 2001 to solicit bids. This statement is misleading. Southern Cal Water could only have become aware that Dynegy would not renew its contract on any terms because of the disincentive to doing so created by A.B. 1 after that law was passed, which was in February of 2001. As noted above, it was Dynegy's pullout that induced Southern Cal Water's frenzied bidding process.

Rehearing, 105 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,986.

3. *Nevada Power Companies: Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific*

The challenge brought by Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific seeks to modify over two hundred forward market contracts with various energy sellers for supply of 25-100 MW blocks of power.[18] These contracts range in price from $33/MWh to $290/MWh, and were entered into in 2000-2001 with ten energy companies. FERC found that these contracts were standard products arranged through independent third-party brokers, and concluded that Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific were price-takers, meaning that those utilities took the price the market yielded rather than bargaining or demanding a certain price. *Nev. Power Co.* (*June 26 Order*), 103 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,353, at ¶ 62,398, 2003 WL 21485862 (June 26, 2003). According to FERC, the Nevada companies did not pursue purchase of a diverse mix of products and therefore failed to hedge the risk that spot market prices might fall. *Id.*

FERC also found that the Nevada companies pursued an aggressive procurement strategy, purchasing more power than necessary to serve the expected load of their local customers. *Id.* FERC suggests that the Nevada companies were trying to buy as much power as they could before sellers discovered their precarious financial situation. *Id.*

FERC found that if these contracts are not modified, the resulting increase to ratepayers would be no more than five percent. *Id.* ¶ 62,397. The Nevada companies recognize

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[18] The Nevada companies recently settled their disputes with Morgan Stanley, El Paso Merchant Energy, and Enron Power Marketing. These settlements have no bearing on the legal issues we address.

that the retail rates have decreased since they agreed to the challenged contracts, but they maintain that Nevada customers will still pay significantly more than they would pay if the contracts were modified to reflect just and reasonable rates. *Order on Rehearing,* 105 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,986. Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific therefore seek to modify their contracts with the energy sellers. *Nev. Power Co.* (*April 11 Order*), 99 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,047, at ¶ 61,185, 2002 WL 32126219 (Apr. 11, 2002). Nevada Power is seeking relief for contracts that had not yet gone to delivery at the refund effective dates set by FERC (between late January and April of 2002, depending on docket number).[19] *Id.* ¶¶ 61,185, 61,192.

C. Agency Proceedings

The agency actions challenged here arise from a series of orders issued by FERC with regard to the complaints filed by the local utilities.

1. *Order Setting the Local Utilities' Complaints for Hearing (April 11 Order)*

On April 11, 2002, pursuant to section 206 of the FPA, FERC set a hearing concerning the contracts "entered into during the time period from November 1, 2000 through June 20, 2001, and that have not yet concluded," because FERC has "no authority to order refunds for contracts or

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[19] Upon setting a section 206 complaint for hearing, FERC establishes a "refund effective date," which is a date establishing the period from which complainants may attain relief should the proceedings extend beyond that established date. In other words, if a party makes a complaint on January 1, 2004, but FERC does not set the complaint for hearing until July 1, 2004, FERC may establish a "refund effective date" of March 1, 2004, so that the complainant will not suffer from the agency's delay or from continued agency proceedings.

transactions that conclude prior to the refund effective date." *Id.* ¶ 61,191 (footnote omitted). FERC also set refund effective dates for each of the complaints. *Id.* ¶ 61,192.

FERC explained in its April 2002 order that it did not have enough information yet to address the *Mobile-Sierra* issues definitively. The agency clarified that "[f]or all but one of the contracts identified by the complainants, Section 6.1 of the umbrella [Power Pool] agreement appears to be the only specific contractual provision which may affect parties' rights to make changes to contracts." *Id.* § 61,190. The remaining contract, between PUD and Morgan Stanley, has a separate provision addressing both FPA sections 205 and 206. *Id.* ¶ 61,190 & n.11. FERC also noted a key dispute between the parties: whether the "spot markets had an adverse effect on the long-term, bilateral markets in California, Nevada and Washington." *Id.* ¶ 61,191. The hearing, designed to illuminate these questions, was to address "whether the dysfunctional California spot markets adversely affected the long-term bilateral markets, and, if so, whether modification of any individual contract at issue is warranted." *Id.* (footnote omitted). FERC specifically excluded "issues concerning the Commission's policies on granting market-based rate authority or on regulation of sellers with such authority." *Id.*

2. *Initial Decision of the Administrative Law Judge (Initial Decision)*

On December 19, 2002, after an extensive hearing, Administrative Law Judge Carmen Cintron issued a lengthy initial decision on the complaints. *Nev. Power Co.*, 101 F.E.R.C. ¶ 63,031, 2002 WL 31889939 (Dec. 19, 2002). She ultimately concluded that (1) the *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest" standard is the applicable standard of review, *id.* ¶ 65,277, and (2) the complainants failed to demonstrate that the spot market sufficiently adversely affected the forward

market to merit revision of the contracts under the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine, *id.* ¶ 65,295.

3. *Order on Initial Decision*

On June 26, 2003, FERC issued a lengthy opinion in which it affirmed the Initial Decision. *Order on Initial Decision,* 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,400. FERC's primary findings included: (1) Section 6.1 of the Power Pool agreement's express reservation of joint modification under section 205 of the FPA impliedly waived the right to seek unilateral modification, *id.* ¶ 62,388; (2) this waiver meant that review was limited to the *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest" standard, *id.* ¶¶ 62,388-89; (3) applying the three factors articulated in *Sierra* and considering "the totality of the circumstances," complainants failed to meet the "public interest" standard because "[t]he fact that a contract becomes uneconomic over time does not render it contrary to the public interest," *id.*¶ 62,384; and (4) the totality of the circumstances evidence analyzed by the ALJ further demonstrated that "the challenged transactions were the result of [the local utilities'] voluntary choices," and there was "no evidence of unfairness, bad faith, or duress in the original negotiations," *id.* ¶¶ 62,399-62,400. Because modification was therefore not warranted, FERC denied the complaints. *Id.* ¶ 62,400.

Although FERC acknowledged that it had set the ALJ hearing in large part to decide "whether the dysfunctional California ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected Western long-term bilateral markets," *Id.* ¶ 62,385, FERC concluded that evidence showing the spot market's effect on the forward market--including that reviewed in the Staff Report[20] "would be relevant to contract modification

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[20] FERC at first stated that it "t[ook] into consideration the findings of the Staff Report," *Order on Initial Decision,* 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,396, but

only where there is a 'just and reasonable' standard of review." *Id.* ¶ 62,397. FERC further explained, applying the *Mobile-Sierra* public interest standard, that "to justify contract modification it is not enough to show that forward prices became unjust and unreasonable due to the impact of spot market dysfunctions; it must be shown that the rates, terms, and conditions are contrary to the public interest," a showing the local utilities failed to make. *Id.*

Commissioner Massey issued a vigorous dissent, disagreeing with all of the Commission's major findings and analysis. He explained that "[o]ur primary calling under the Federal Power Act is to ensure that prices are just and reasonable 24 hours a day, seven days a week." *Id.* ¶ 62,403 (Massey, Comm'r, dissenting). Furthermore, even under a "public interest" standard, which he maintained was not applicable to these contracts, Commissioner Massey determined there was

> "simply no persuasive public interest rationale for protecting and sanctifying contracts negotiated in this unprecedented and extraordinary environment. ... It would simply defy logic to conclude that the high prices in these contracts were not adversely influenced by market conditions that included the exercise of market power and widespread market manipulation."

Id. ¶ 62,408.

4. *Order on Requests for Rehearing and Clarification*

Complainants applied for rehearing. On November 10, 2003, FERC reaffirmed its previous holdings. *Order on*

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later stated its conclusion that those findings were not "relevant" under *Mobile-Sierra*, the standard FERC determined appropriate. *Id.* ¶ 62,397.

Rehearing, 105 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,980. FERC, however, revised its previous factual findings to recognize that the customers of Snohomish and Southern Cal Water did experience a retail rate increase. FERC concluded, however, that these increases either were not significant or were not pertinent, because the local utilities did not prove the cause of the increases. *Id.* ¶¶ 61,986-87. FERC also rejected petitioners' claims that two of the Commissioners violated procedural requirements and the Sunshine Act by engaging in ex parte communications. *Id.* ¶¶ 61,991-94. The local utilities then filed this petition for review of FERC's decision.

We review FERC's orders to ensure that they are not "arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law." 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A). We review de novo the question whether FERC complied with and understood its statutory mandate. *City of Fremont v. FERC*, 336 F.3d 910, 914 (9th Cir. 2003); *Am. Rivers v. FERC*, 201 F.3d 1186, 1194 (9th Cir. 1999). We "defer to the Commission's interpretations of the statutory provisions it administers, but we remain 'the final authority on issues of statutory construction and must reject administrative constructions which are contrary to clear congressional intent.'" *Am. Rivers*, 201 F.3d at 1194 (quoting *Natural Res. Def. Council v. U.S. Dep't of the Interior*, 113 F.3d 1121, 1124 (9th Cir. 1999)). FERC's factual findings are conclusive so long as they are "supported by substantial evidence." 16 U.S.C. § 8251(b).

IV. Prerequisites To Applying Mobile-Sierra

As explained above, there is but one statutory standard addressing the lawfulness of wholesale electricity rates. That standard requires that *all* rates be "just and reasonable." While there is language in some cases

suggesting otherwise,[21] we are convinced that *Mobile-Sierra* establishes one means of review under the just and reasonable standard, applicable in certain limited circumstances. The statute will admit of no other conclusion, and the Supreme Court case law supports it.

Sierra framed its analysis as a determination as to whether the Federal Power Commission met its "condition precedent" to a section 206 remedy, a "finding that the existing rate is 'unjust, unreasonable, unduly discriminatory or preferential.' " 350 U.S. at 353. It then faulted the Commission's finding that the established rate was invalid *not* because it applied the usual section 206(a) "unreasonable" standard, but because "the Commission holds that the contract rate is unreasonable solely because it yields less than a fair return on the net invested capital." *Id.* at 354-55. As the *Sierra* Court explained,

> [W]hile it may be that the Commission may not normally *impose* upon a public utility a rate which would produce less than a fair return, it does not follow that the public utility may not itself agree by contract to a rate affording less than a fair return or that, if it does so, it is entitled to be relieved of its improvident bargain.... [T]he purpose of the power given the Commission by § 206(a) is the protection of the public interest, as distinguished from the private interests of the utilities.... When § 206(a) is read in the light of this purpose, it is clear that a contract may not be said to be either 'unjust' or 'unreasonable' simply

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[21] *Boston Edison Co.*, 233 F.3d at 65, for example, refers to *Mobile-Sierra* as establishing a "public interest standard," separate from the statutory just and reasonable requirement, and referring to that standard as having been "created out of whole cloth."

because it is unprofitable to the public utility.

Id. at 355. *Sierra,* then, simply held that considerations as to what is "unjust" or "unreasonable" differ in the context of an established bilateral contract, not that the statutory standards no longer govern. The Supreme Court confirmed this understanding in *Verizon,* explaining that "[i]n wholesale markets, the party charging the rate and the party charged were often sophisticated businesses enjoying presumptively equal bargaining power, who could be expected to negotiate a 'just and reasonable' rate as between the two of them." 535 U.S. at 479.

Beginning with that understanding of *Mobile-Sierra,* we turn to the limited circumstances in which its presumption applies. Although no case has outlined these conditions succinctly, we derive three prerequisites from the context of *Mobile-Sierra* and from later cases employing the doctrine.

A. Contractual Waiver

As an initial matter, the contested contract by its own terms must not preclude the limited *Mobile-Sierra* mode of review. *See Texaco Inc. v. FERC* (*Texaco II*), 148 F.3d 1091, 1096 (D.C. Cir. 1998); *Ne. Utils. Serv. Co. v. FERC* (*Ne. Utils. I*), 993 F.2d 937, 960 (1st Cir. 1993). *Mobile-Sierra* presumes that private parties have negotiated an agreement that they view as just and reasonable over the time period covered. If, by the very terms of their agreement, the parties indicate otherwise, FERC cannot assume the mutual satisfaction of the parties.

For example, parties can include in a contract an express reservation of a right to make changes unilaterally, known as a "*Memphis* clause." *See United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Memphis Light, Gas & Water Div.,* 358 U.S. 103, 105,

112 (1958). Such a clause will preclude application of the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption. The rationale for enforcing such clauses is that if the contract does not settle rates as between the parties for the term of the agreement or call for limited, *Mobile-Sierra* review, then application of *Mobile-Sierra* does not stabilize or protect the sanctity of contract. *See id.* at 112 (noting that the "decisive difference" between *Memphis* and *Mobile* was that "in *Mobile* one party to a contract was asserting that the Natural Gas Act somehow gave it the right unilaterally to abrogate its contractual undertaking, whereas here petitioner seeks simply to assert, in accordance with the procedures specified by the Act, rights *expressly reserved* to it by contract") (emphasis added). In other words, *Mobile-Sierra* serves to protect contracts from unilateral change, but that purpose is not served when the parties expressly have permitted such change.

B. Regulatory Context

Even if it is established that the parties contracted with the intent that *Mobile-Sierra* apply, a further barrier remains: The regulatory context in which the contracts were initially formed must provide a sound basis to believe that the resulting rates are just and reasonable. Absent such assurances, FERC's reliance on the presumption would amount to a complete abdication of its statutory responsibility under the FPA. As the following sub-sections explain, two related conditions operate to ensure that a foundation for the presumption exists: (1) timely and procedurally effective review of rates--which in the contemporary regulatory regime can be limited to review of a utility's market-based rate authority in the first instance, and (2) meaningful substantive standards for review of the circumstances of contract formation.

1. Timely and Effective Review of Rates

To justify the *Mobile-Sierra* mode of review, the regulatory scheme in which the contracts are formed must provide FERC with an opportunity for initial review of the contracted rate. In *Mobile* and *Sierra,* for example, the rates had been submitted to the agency previously under section 205 and allowed to remain in effect. *See Mobile,* 350 U.S. at 336; *Sierra,* 350 U.S. at 352. Such an initial review is an important precondition to *Mobile-Sierra* because, as FERC has explained, applying the doctrine in "first review cases would mean that '[the agency's] ability to protect the public interest would be negligible and public regulation would consist of little more than rubber-stamping private contracts.'" *Potomac Elec. Power Co. v. FERC* (*PEPCO*), 210 F.3d 403, 409 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (quoting *Ne. Utils. Serv. Co.,* 66 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,332, at ¶ 62,087, 1994 WL 92839 (1994), *aff'd,* 55 F.3d 686 (1st Cir. 1995)); *see also PEPCO,* 210 F.3d at 406 (noting that challenged contracts had "been found to be just and reasonable when originally approved" by FERC).

Consistent with its previous rulings, FERC concedes here that an opportunity for initial review of whether a rate is just and reasonable is necessary for *Mobile-Sierra* to apply. The Intervenor-Respondents, however, cite to a thirty-year old D.C. Circuit decision, *see Borough of Lansdale v. Fed. Power Comm'n,* 494 F.2d 1104, 1112-14 (D.C. Cir. 1974), and argue that an opportunity for initial review is *not* necessary to trigger the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption. We disagree.

The analysis in *Lansdale* is not applicable to this case. In *Lansdale,* a seller, joined by the Commission, sought to ignore a rate in a contract to which it had previously agreed but which it had not properly filed with the Commission, and instead file a higher rate, "as if the contract had never been negotiated." *Id.* at 1112; *see also*

id. at 1107-08. The D.C. Circuit refused to allow this unilateral revision of an agreement, holding that the Commission could not permit the higher rate of the second contract to go into effect unless and until it found that the original rates were unlawful. *See id.* at 1117.

Lansdale did not allow the seller to "convert its statutory duty to file into a vehicle for breaching the 1971 contract with Lansdale." *Id.* at 1112. In other words, *Lansdale* focused on whether *Mobile-Sierra* review allows the adoption of a *second* contract with a higher rate when the first was never correctly filed with the Commission. As such, *Lansdale* primarily reflected concern over a seller's abuse of the rate-filing requirement. *Lansdale* did *not* decide, because the question was not before it, that the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption always applies to the filing of an initial rate, regardless of the circumstances.

In this case, the answers to the questions presented turn in part upon whether *Mobile-Sierra* applies to the rate *first* set in a contract entered into under a seller's market-based rate authority, rather than only to a later challenge maintaining that earlier-established rates are *no longer* just and reasonable. The local utilities do not maintain that the original contract is void because it was never filed, but rather that the rates set were unjust and unreasonable when established and should be modified. *Lansdale's* position that a seller may not profit by failing properly to file a rate-setting contract it freely entered into is hardly remarkable, but is also not particularly pertinent to the questions at issue here.

Indeed, just a year before *Lansdale* was decided, the Supreme Court recognized the importance of an opportunity for an initial just and reasonableness review to the overall statutory scheme. In *Federal Power Commission v. Texaco, Inc.* (*Texaco I*), 417 U.S. 380 (1974), the Court struck down

an indirect regulatory scheme adopted by the Commission that would have provided a "blanket certificate procedure for small producers of natural gas." *See id.* at 382, 395. One of the primary reasons for the decision was that "[t]here was no finding that these contemplated increased rates for flowing gas would be just and reasonable. The Commission merely asserts in its brief here that it was familiar with the existing contracts and must have considered the rates reserved to be acceptable under the Act." *Id.* at 396.

In short, FERC is correct to recognize that the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine apples only if a newly-entered contract remains in effect *after* there is an opportunity for plenary, "just and reasonable" agency review.

2. *Meaningful Review of the Circumstances of Contract Formation*

Not only must FERC have an opportunity for some initial review of rates, but the scope of that review must permit consideration of the factors relevant to the propriety of the contract's formation. *See Atl. City Elec. Co.*, 295 F.3d at 14 (holding that *Mobile-Sierra* applies "assuming that there was no reason to question what transpired at the contract formation stage") (citing *Town of Norwood v. FERC*, 587 F.2d 1306, 1312 (D.C. Cir. 1978)). The original premise of *Mobile-Sierra* was that as long as the rate was just and reasonable when the contract was formed, there would be a presumption-- based on both the need to protect stability of contract and the likelihood that market participants entering into long-term contracts can protect their own interests--that the reasonableness continued throughout the term of the contract. *See Verizon*, 535 U.S. at 479 ("In wholesale markets, the party charging the rate and the party charged were often sophisticated businesses enjoying presumptively equal bargaining power, who could be expected to negotiate a 'just and reasonable' rate as

between the two of them."). In the present regulatory regime, these relevant factors focus on whether the original negotiations occurred in a functional marketplace such that we may presume the contracted rates were originally just and reasonable.

V. Application of Mobile-Sierra

A. Contractual Waiver of Section 206 Rights

Having established the prerequisites to *Mobile-Sierra* review under the current regulatory regime, we address first whether the contracts at issue permit *Mobile-Sierra* review. In this case, FERC determined that there was no express reservation of unilateral modification. As FERC noted, "[f]or all but one of the contracts identified by the complainants, Section 6.1 of the umbrella [Power Pool] Agreement appears to be the only specific contractual provision which may affect parties' rights to make changes to contracts entered into under the [Power Pool] agreement." *April 11 Order,* 99 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,190.[22]

The relevant portion of section 6.1 states:

> 'Nothing contained herein shall be construed as affecting in any way the right of the Parties to jointly make application to FERC for a change in

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[22] FERC found that Section 39B of the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley Confirmation Agreement expressly restricts the parties' rights to amend under both FPA sections 205 and 206. *April 11 Order,* 99 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,190 & n.11. FERC noted, however, that even if Snohomish could overcome the restriction in Section 39B, it would still be restricted by Section 6.1 of the Power Pool agreement. *Order on Initial Decision,* 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,389. Because we hold the Power Pool agreement, both standing alone and taking Section 6.1 into account, is consistent with *Mobile-Sierra* review, we have no need to consider Section 39B of the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley Confirmation Agreement.

> the rates and charges, classification, service, terms, or conditions affecting [Power Pool] transactions under Section 205 of the Federal Power Act and pursuant to FERC rules and regulations promulgated thereunder."

Id. ¶ 61,190 n.10. Applying the interpretive doctrine of *expressio unius est exclusio alterius,*[23] FERC viewed the reservation of *joint* section 205 rights as confirming the parties' intention otherwise to abide by the contractual terms for the time period covered. *Order on Initial Decision,* 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,388.

"FERC is entitled to some deference in construing contracts where the sales are subject to FERC regulation." *Boston Edison,* 233 F.3d at 66 (citing *Memphis,* 358 U.S. at 114; *see also City of Seattle v. FERC,* 923 F.2d 713, 716 (9th Cir. 1991) (granting FERC deference in the interpretation of contracts). With or without that deference, we agree with FERC that these contracts do not preclude *Mobile-Sierra* review, but we do not rely on the *expressio unius* precept in so concluding. Instead, like the D.C. Circuit in *Texaco II,* 148 F.3d at 1096, we hold that private long-term contracts can be *generally* governed by *Mobile-Sierra* if such review is otherwise appropriate, unless there is a specific indication in the contract that section 205 or 206 rights have been reserved.

Texaco II considered a boilerplate clause that said that the contract "shall comply with all applicable laws, statutes, ordinances, safety codes and rules and regulations of governmental authorities having jurisdiction." *Id.* The D.C. Circuit held that such a general clause does not reserve

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[23] The Latin phrase means the "express[ion] or inclu[sion of] one thing implies the exclusion of the other." Black's Law Dictionary 620 (8th ed.1999).

compliance with section 206 standards. In so deciding, the D.C. Circuit stated, in essence, a default rule, explaining: "The law is quite clear: absent contractual language 'susceptible to the construction that the rate may be altered while the contract[ ] subsist[s],' the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine applies." *Id.* (alterations in original) (quoting *Appalachian Power Co. v. Fed. Power Comm'n*, 529 F.2d 342, 348 (D.C. Cir. 1976)). After *Texaco II*, the prevailing rule of contract interpretation with regard to the preservation of limited *Mobile-Sierra* review, according to the First Circuit, is that general statements that the law will "*otherwise* be binding" do not "negate the ordinary, default rule that *Mobile-Sierra* govern[s] FERC-proposed changes." *Boston Edison*, 233 F.3d at 67 (citing *Texaco II*, 148 F.3d at 1096).

The trio of authorities cited by the local utilities, all from the D.C. Circuit and all pre-*Texaco II*, are not inconsistent with this interpretive principle. *See Union Pac. Fuels, Inc. v. FERC*, 129 F.3d 157 (D.C. Cir. 1997); *Papago Tribal Util. Auth. v. FERC*, 723 F.2d 950 (D.C. Cir. 1983); *Kansas Cities v. FERC*, 723 F.2d 82 (D.C. Cir. 1983). In two of these cases, the court inferred an intent to permit full FERC review from a provision restricting review in narrow circumstances. *See Papago*, 723 F.2d at 954; *Kansas Cities*, 723 F.2d at 86-90. To infer from a narrow restriction on *unilateral* changes an intent otherwise to allow such changes, as *Kansas Cities* and *Papago* permitted, is quite different from inferring from a narrow authorization of *joint* authority to make changes an intent to allow *unilateral* changes, as the local utilities here insist FERC was required to do.

By contrast with *Papago*, *Kansas Cities*, and this case, the disputed contracts in *Union Pacific Fuels* did include a *Memphis* clause. *See Union Pac. Fuels*, 129 F.3d at 161. The contracts, however, also included a clause restricting the ability of the parties to seek a change to the "modified fixed variable rate design." *Id.* (internal quotation

mark omitted). In these unusual circumstances, the D.C. Circuit upheld FERC's order requiring a provider to file proposed changes to its rate structure under section 5 of the Natural Gas Act despite that narrow restriction and noted:

> Nothing in the contracts expressly exempted the private agreement from rate changes initiated by FERC under NGA § 5.... While Petitioners protest that boilerplate language acknowledging rate changes by FERC should not render [the] *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine inapplicable, ... they do not explain why they could not have adopted language that would simply and clearly have invoked *Mobile-Sierra*.

Id. at 161-62. *Texaco II*, issued by the same court a year later, explained that this language in *Union Pacific Fuels* does not have application beyond the situation there presented, in which the contract contains a clause that does, generally, negate the default *Mobile-Sierra* rule. *See Texaco II*, 148 F.3d at 1096 (noting that in *Union Pacific Fuels*, the court "*inadvertently* lent support to the inference" that absent express language *invoking Mobile-Sierra*, FERC ordinarily is free to review rates without regard to the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption (emphasis added)).

We agree with the D.C. and First Circuits that the *Mobile-Sierra* presumptions are, in essence, self-executing. Adoption of a *Memphis* clause permitting a party to an energy contract to modify its terms unilaterally demonstrates that the parties were not seeking to establish the stability of energy contracts the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine seeks to foster. Absent such a clause, the *Mobile-Sierra* balance between preserving the stability of private contracts and protecting the public interest in just and reasonable rates prevails. Preserving *joint* modification does not negate the default application of the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption when that presumption is otherwise appropriate, as the *Mobile-Sierra*

presumption applies to unilateral, not joint, rate changes. Indeed, parties to energy contracts, like parties to any other contract, are free, by agreement, to vary the terms of the contract mid-term, with or without a prior pact allowing them to do so. When parties to an energy contract do so vary an agreement, sections 205 and 206 apply according to their express terms.

We therefore uphold FERC's interpretation of section 6.1 of the Power Pool agreement as reasonable.

B. Timely and Effective Review of Rates

As the parties intended *Mobile-Sierra* review to apply, we next consider whether, as FERC maintains, its blanket grant of market-based rate authority qualifies as sufficient prior review and approval of all contracts made under that authorization to trigger the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption in any later section 206 challenge. If not, then the contracts here were not subject to "first review" by FERC under the FPA and do not trigger the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine. We hold that although market-based rate authority *can* qualify as sufficient prior review to justify limited *Mobile-Sierra* review, it can only do so when accompanied by effective oversight permitting timely reconsideration of market-based authorization if market conditions change.

Two fairly recent decisions of this circuit considered the role of market-based rate authority under the FPA. In *Grays Harbor,* we held that a contract entered into during the California energy crisis pursuant to the market-based rate regime was protected under the "filed rate doctrine."[24] *See*

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[24] The filed rate doctrine provides that state law and some federal law (e.g.antitrust) may not be used to strike down a rate subject to FERC's exclusive jurisdiction. *See Grays Harbor,* 379 F.3d at 650; *see also Davel Commc'ns, Inc. v. Qwest Corp.*, 460 F.3d 1075, 1084-86 (9th Cir.

379 F.3d at 651-52. We relied heavily on FERC's contention that the regime offered continued and ongoing oversight and thereby "assured that the market-based rates charged comply with the FPA's requirement that rates be just and reasonable." *Id.* at 651. On that basis, *Grays Harbor* concluded that, "while market-based rates may not have historically been the type of rate envisioned by the filed rate doctrine, ... they do not fall outside the purview of the doctrine." *Id.*

More recently, we again stressed the need for oversight in a market-based rate regime in holding "that market-based tariffs do not, *per se* violate the FPA." *Lockyer,* 383 F.3d at 1014. *Lockyer* held the initial grant of market-based rate authority alone was not enough to assure just and reasonable rates, as FERC recognized when it "affirmed in its presentation before us that it is *not* contending that approval of a market-based tariff *based on market forces alone* would comply with the FPA or the filed rate doctrine." *Id.* at 1013 (emphasis added). The court clarified further that "a market-based tariff cannot be structured so as to virtually deregulate an industry and remove it from statutorily required oversight." *Id.* at 1014.

Lockyer's emphasis on the need for continued oversight of contract rates is critically important to our current inquiry. In *Lockyer,* California sought relief under section 205 from rates established by wholesale energy companies (many of whom are Intervenor-Respondents here) while there were dysfunctions in the spot market during the California energy crisis. The Court made the following observation regarding FERC "oversight" at the time:

Despite the promise of truly competitive market-

2006) (discussing the filed rate doctrine).

> based rates, the California energy market was subjected to artificial manipulation on a massive scale. *With FERC abdicating its regulatory responsibility,* California consumers were subjected to a variety of market machinations, such as "round trip trades" and "hockey-stick bidding," coupled with manipulative corporate strategies, such as those nicknamed "Fat-Boy," "Get Shorty," and "Death Star."

Id. at 1014-15 (emphasis added) (footnotes omitted). Under these circumstances, the court concluded, "[t]o cabin FERC's section 205 refund authority ... would be manifestly contrary to the fundamental purpose and structure of the FPA.... The FPA cannot be construed to immunize those who overcharge and manipulate markets in violation of the FPA." *Id.* at 1017.

The requirement of continued oversight in a market-based rate regime applies equally to the section 206 context, and to the application of the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine in section 206 review. *Lockyer* flatly stated that the FPA does not allow a market-based regime absent "implied enforcement mechanisms sufficient to provide substitute remedies for the obtaining of refunds for the imposition of unjust, unreasonable and discriminatory rates." *Id.* at 1016. Furthermore, *Lockyer* indicates that even in a properly approved market-based rate regime, section 206 remedies are still fully available. *See id.* at 1017 (noting that the "only remedies [under section 206] are prospective").

Taken together, these recent circuit decisions support the following conclusion: Market-based rate authority provides a meaningful opportunity for prior review and approval of rates under the FPA, an essential prerequisite to the *Mobile-Sierra* mode of rate review, *only* insofar as FERC implements and uses an effective oversight mechanism *after* the market-based rate authorization is initially granted. Only

then can FERC meet its statutory duty to ensure that *all* rates are "just and reasonable."

This conclusion is bolstered by the judicial treatment of two similar regimes instituted by FERC in the past. In *Texaco I*, the Supreme Court considered the Federal Power Commission's attempt to utilize a "blanket certificate procedure for small producers of natural gas" that would "relieve [ ] them of almost all filing requirements." 417 U.S. at 382. The Federal Power Commission's rationale was that small producers would be subject to the forces of the market and could therefore only charge what the market would bear. *See id.* at 390, 94 S.Ct. 2315. The Federal Power Commission's rationale in *Texaco I* thus was essentially the same as FERC's rationale here: That case's "small producers," like the market-based rate authority producers here, were asserted to lack market power and were therefore authorized to set rates with no further oversight. The assumption was that the rates set would necessarily be competitive and would therefore tend to reflect the cost of production, including the cost of attracting investment.

The Court affirmed that such a system of "indirect regulation" was permissible under the Natural Gas Act, *see id.*, but struck down the order because it did not sufficiently assure *oversight* to meet the statutory requirement of "just and reasonable" review. *See id.* at 395-96. The Court so held despite the FPC's assurances that it would review the prices of contracts made pursuant to this authority, *see id.* at 396-97, stating:

> [W]e should also stress that in our view the prevailing price in the marketplace *cannot be the final measure of "just and reasonable" rates mandated by the Act.* It is abundantly clear from the history of the Act and from the events that prompted its adoption that Congress considered

> that the natural gas industry was heavily concentrated and that monopolistic forces were distorting the market price for natural gas.... In subjecting producers to regulation because of anticompetitive conditions in the industry, Congress could *not* have assumed that "just and reasonable" rates could conclusively be determined by reference to market price.

Id. at 397-99 (emphasis added) (footnotes omitted).

The D.C. Circuit followed *Texaco I's* approach when considering a FERC regulation for the oil industry based on the premise that "competitive market forces should be relied upon in the main to assure proper rate levels." *See Farmers Union,* 734 F.2d at 1490. That court was adamant in holding "FERC's largely undocumented reliance on market forces as the principal means of rate regulation to be ... misplaced. It is of course elementary that market failure and the control of monopoly power are central rationales for the imposition of rate regulation." *Id.* at 1508 (citing Stephen Breyer, *Regulation and Its Reform* 15-16 (1982)) (footnote omitted). Indeed, the "fundamental flaw in the Commission's scheme" was that "nothing in the regulatory scheme itself acts as a monitor to see if [competition drives rates into the 'zone of reasonableness'] or to check rates if it does not." *Id.* at 1509.

Here, FERC failed to adopt any monitoring mechanism before applying deferential *Mobile-Sierra* review to the challenged contracts. When FERC encouraged the local utilities to purchase power in the forward market, the agency promised to oversee the forward market contracts to ensure their justness and reasonableness. *See December 15 Order,* 93 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,994. FERC later held, however, that its approval of energy sellers' market-based rate authority--long *prior* to the market failures that gave rise to the December 15 Order--allowed it to apply the *Mobile-*

Sierra doctrine without any direct inquiry into whether the resulting rates were in fact "just and reasonable," and also without any inquiry into the actual state of the market at the time contracts were negotiated. *See Order on Initial Decision*, 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,388-89.

In light of the foregoing discussion, we must answer the crucial question: Did FERC provide sufficient oversight for contracts made under market-based rate authority to ensure that the resulting rates were within the statutory "just and reasonable" range in the first instance, thereby permitting reliance on the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine as to the continuing effectiveness of those contracts? We hold that it did not.

FERC asserted in its Order on Initial Decision that the grant of market-based rate authority *is* sufficient predetermination, so that it was "not required specifically to review each agreement" made pursuant to the grant of market-based rate authority. *Id.* ¶ 62,389. In other words, FERC contends that because it requires, before granting market-based rate authority, a showing of lack of market power and regular reporting, it has therefore fulfilled its oversight role, and no further oversight is necessary. FERC asserted the same position on rehearing, maintaining that its decision in *Lockyer* supports that result. *Order on Rehearing*, 105 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,982-83.

In FERC's *Lockyer* decision, the agency held that once market-based rate authority is granted, additional oversight is a "compliance issue." *California ex rel. Lockyer*, 99 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,247 at ¶ 62,063, 2002 WL 32035504 (2002); *see also Lockyer*, 383 F.3d at 1015. We rejected this aspect of FERC's *Lockyer* decision, however, because without active oversight, "effective federal regulation is removed altogether." *Lockyer*, 383 F.3d at 1015. We reject FERC's reliance on that same proposition as

a pillar of FERC's invocation of the *Mobile-Sierra* mode of review in this case.

FERC's position here, as in *Lockyer,* is that it fulfills its monitoring obligation by imposing on sellers with market-based rate authority the requirement that they file Quarterly Transaction Reports, make the Reports available for public review, and submit data on a triennial basis to confirm the continued lack (or mitigation) of market power. This data collection activity, however, was insufficient to fulfill FERC's statutory obligation with respect to the contracts challenged here. As demonstrated by what actually happened during the California energy crisis, this sporadic data collection approach is pragmatically unlikely to expose in a timely manner the impact of market changes--in this instance, the impact on the forward market of acknowledged severe market changes within the dysfunctional spot market. That such impacts can occur without affecting FERC's continuing approval of market-based rate authority undercuts FERC's assertion that initial just and reasonableness review occurred with regard to the challenged contracts sufficient to trigger the *Mobile-Sierra* mode of review.

In particular, the quarterly reporting requirement, standing alone, permits review of the grounds for market-based rate authority only with regard to contracts entered into *after* the impact of the market dysfunction or market power on long-term bilateral contracts has already occurred, affecting the likelihood that the contracts in fact set rates within the statutory "just and reasonable" range. There is a crucial difference between this review--that is, purely prospective review, affecting only future contracts--and one that permits consideration of the market conditions at the time a challenged forward contract was entered. *See El Paso Elec. Co.,* 108 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,071, at ¶ 61,370 n.10 (2004) ("A revocation of market-based rates ... would not void contracts that parties may have signed....."). The latter kind

of remedy is the kind the local utilities ask for here: They seek *modification* of the contracts here at issue, prospectively from the refund effective date but based on the market circumstances that prevailed at the times the contracts were negotiated.

A hypothetical explains the dilemma with FERC's present "oversight scheme": Seller A receives market-based rate authority in Year 1. In Year 5, prices increase dramatically in short-term markets. Buyer B, needing to escape these markets, agrees to long-term contracts X, Y, and Z to buy wholesale energy from Seller A. Buyer B agrees to the contract terms because in a frantic market Seller A is one of the only suppliers willing to enter into a long-term contract, and Buyer B needs to ensure that its supply is able to meet the load required by its retail customers. In its next required quarterly report in Year 6, Seller A dutifully transfers the proper information about its rates to FERC. FERC--perhaps reviewing contracts X, Y, and Z--discovers that the assumption of a functioning market underlying its approval of market-based rate authority for Seller A does not accord with the rates being charged in forward contracts generally, or in those entered by Seller A in particular. FERC therefore revokes Seller A's market-based rate authority. FERC's action, however, will do nothing to reform those troubling contracts.

The problem raised by this hypothetical is that FERC has *no* opportunity to review whether contracts X, Y, and Z are just and reasonable before they are entered. As FERC recognizes, revocation of market-based rate authority in Year 6 in the above hypothetical can only provide relief for contracts made thereafter. *See id.* If a contract is entered into in Year 5, FERC cannot consider whether the basis for market-based rate authority had so atrophied by this time that the economic basis for assuming the rates established would be within the statutorily mandated "just and reasonable"

range had evaporated. Instead, FERC applies the most-forgiving version of review, the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption that long-term bilateral contracts will reflect just and reasonable rates, without *any* opportunity for initial review of such contractual rates, whether cost or market based.

This case is precisely parallel to the above hypothetical. For example, Enron, an Intervenor-Respondent in this case, *did* have its market-based rate authority revoked, because of the actions it took during the time period in which the contracts at issue here were entered into. *Enron Power Mktg., Inc.*, 103 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,343, at ¶ 62,302 (2003). By revoking that power, FERC restricted Enron's *prospective* power to enter into contracts. *Id.* ¶¶ 62,307-10. The very day after revoking Enron's market-based rate authority, however, FERC denied Nevada Power's request to reform its contracts with Enron even though they were made during the very period FERC identified Enron as grossly abusing and violating its market-based rate authority. *See Order on Initial Decision*, 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,397. FERC accomplished this result by applying a *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest" standard to the contract reformation proceedings. *See id.* By doing so, FERC neither performed the full scope of "just and reasonable" review nor revisited the market circumstances in which the agreements were entered to determine whether those circumstances were sufficiently functional that they were likely to yield long-term contracts within the "just and reasonable" range.

This approach to section 206 review simply cannot be squared with the statutory scheme. Section 206 commands prospective revision of rates that, as of the refund effective date, are not just and reasonable: When FERC determines that a rate is unjust or unreasonable, "the Commission shall determine the just and reasonable rate,

charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract to be thereafter observed and in force, and shall fix the same by order." 16 U.S.C. § 824e(a). By layering *Mobile-Sierra* review on top of a market-based rate authority that can be revoked only prospectively from the refund effective date, FERC abdicates its statutory responsibility to provide such rate revision when appropriate.

FERC represents in its post-argument submission that the local utilities could have challenged the sellers market-based rate authority at the time they entered into the challenged contracts. That representation is true, but beside the point. Any such challenge, even if successful, could not have been a basis for reforming the challenged contracts, even if the excessively high rates established by the contracts were strong indications that market-based rate authority *should* be revoked. Rescission of market-based rate authority still would have affected only later contracts, leaving the challenged agreements subject to limited *Mobile-Sierra* public interest review.

As a result of FERC's refusal to consider the abrogation of market-based rate authority except with respect to future contracts, and given the dramatic and sudden nature of the onset of the California energy crisis and the limited period of time that the local utilities had to respond to it, the local utilities here had no meaningful opportunity to institute a challenge to these sellers' market-based rate authority before entering the disputed agreements. For example, in February 2001, California enacted legislation allowing its Department of Water Resources to purchase power on behalf of its deteriorating investor-owned utilities. Southern Cal Water's previous supplier, Dynegy promptly told Southern Cal Water that it was "not interested in extending or renegotiating" its previous one year contract with Southern Cal Water that expired in April 2001, as Dynegy "could sell its generation output to the State of California."

Southern Cal Water was thus left with less than two months to obtain power for the following year and only three "choices": (1) immediately negotiate a long-term contract that could take effect in April 2001; (2) shift to the spot markets, by then recognized by FERC as manipulated and dysfunctional markets that had already caused hyper-pricing and bankrupted several utility companies; or (3) shut down operation and fail to provide electricity for its retail customers. Faced with these choices, Southern Cal Water entered into a forward contract based on a bidding period of little more than two weeks. Under these time constraints, Southern Cal Water could not have challenged the seller's market-based rate authority, obtained an order from FERC, and then negotiated a forward agreement and signed a contract with the very seller whose market-based rate authority it had just challenged. There was simply no realistic way that Southern Cal Water could continue to participate in the forward market while assuring meaningful "just and reasonable" review.

Ultimately, the fatal flaw in FERC's approach to "oversight" is that it precludes timely consideration of sudden market changes and offers no protection to purchasers victimized by the abuses of sellers or dysfunctional market conditions that FERC itself only notices in hindsight. For example, on December 15, 2000, FERC issued an order encouraging the adoption of long-term contracts and establishing a benchmark price of $74/Mwh. *See December 15 Order,* 93 F.E.R.C. at ¶¶ 61,994-95. FERC promised that it would "be vigilant in monitoring the possible exercise of market power ... [t]o address concerns about potentially unjust and unreasonable rates in the long-term markets." *Id.* ¶ 61,994. In fact, because of its flawed processes, FERC was never able to "address concerns about potentially unjust and unreasonable rates in the long-term markets," because it had no means to revoke market-based

rate authority before the precipitously entered contracts went into effect and became, in FERC's view, no longer subject to cost-based "just and reasonable" review. As a result, FERC failed to detect that, according to its own benchmarks, something was awry in the forward markets that produced these contracts.

As in *Lockyer*, we do not dispute that FERC may adopt a regulatory regime that differs from the historical cost-based regime of the energy market, or that market-based rate authority may be a tenable choice if sufficient safeguards are taken to provide for sufficient oversight. FERC, however, cannot use that choice to excuse its duty to maintain effective oversight and then invoke *Mobile-Sierra* as a ground for precluding ordinary rate review, including review of the propriety of market-based rate authority at the time the contracts became effective. Any other conclusion would permit FERC to abdicate entirely its statutory responsibility under the FPA to ensure that *all* rates, including bilateral contract rates, are "just and reasonable."

C. Meaningful Review of Contract Formation

This fundamental procedural error was compounded by FERC's substantive adherence to *Mobile-Sierra* without regard to the market conditions in which the contracts at issue were formed. As we have explained, *Mobile-Sierra* cannot apply without a determination that the challenged contract was initially formed free from the influence of improper factors, such as market manipulation, the leverage of market power, or an otherwise dysfunctional market.

The local utilities argue here that the frenzied market conditions of the California energy crisis in the spot market influenced the forward market in such a manner as to raise a question about what transpired during formation of the forward contracts here at issue. The most important

evidence supporting this position is the FERC Staff Report concerning price manipulation in the western United States at the time these contracts were formed. The FERC staff concluded:

> Our analysis shows ... that forward power prices negotiated during 2000-2001 in the western United States were *significantly influenced* by the then-current spot power prices. This tells us that the *trauma* of the dysfunctional spot power prices at that time *so influenced buyers that they placed great weight on these prices in forming future expectations.*

Staff Report at ES-9 (emphasis added). The report noted that the influence was greatest for one-to-two year forward contracts,[25] and that there is a "statistically significant relationship" between the spot price and forward price. *Id.*

Although it noted the Staff's findings, FERC held them irrelevant because they did not demonstrate that the rates in the forward contracts affected the "public interest." *Order on Initial Decision,* 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,397. FERC therefore did not consider the staff findings in determining *whether* the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine was applicable to these contracts; instead, FERC discarded the findings after determining, for independent reasons, that the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine *was* applicable. The upshot is that FERC failed ever to consider whether the influence of the spot markets on the forward markets reached a level sufficient to question whether FERC could assume that two private parties had negotiated a "just and reasonable" contract in the first instance and therefore apply the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption.

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[25] Most of the contracts challenged by Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific are within that time range.

FERC's very limited factual findings regarding the state of the market at the time the challenged contracts were negotiated are thus not responsive to the theory advanced by the local utilities here. FERC held only that because the local utilities entered into the challenged contracts "voluntarily" and because "there is no evidence of unfairness, bad faith, or duress in the original negotiations [of the forward contracts], the [local utilities] are not entitled to change their bargains." *Id.* at ¶¶ 62,399-62,400. But the local utilities do not allege that the energy companies manipulated their negotiations of the contracts here at issue; the local utilities challenge the *context,* not the conduct, of those negotiations. Consistently with the Staff Report's findings, the local utilities are maintaining that factors exogenous to the forward market, the dysfunction and manipulation of the spot market, artificially influenced the rates in the forward market, creating market dysfunction in the forward market.[26] The local utilities' argument is that when such market dysfunction occurs *and* there is no opportunity to revisit the propriety of the market-based rate authority in effect when the contract was entered, FERC cannot assume that contractual terms were just and reasonable as between the contracting parties when the agreement was negotiated. As a result, FERC cannot focus only on "public interest" considerations when the rates established are thereafter challenged.

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[26] FERC's premise, never examined in its orders and opinions, is that the spot and forward markets can and should be analyzed separately. Many of the participants in the two markets are the same, however, as is the product sold--electric power. The only difference is the time frame for delivery of that product. For present purposes, we accept FERC's assumption that the two markets are sufficiently separate that there is at least a question as to the scope of the impact of the dysfunctional spot market on the forward market.

In this case, the questions raised by the Staff Report--whether and how the manipulated spot market influenced the forward markets--*are* relevant to determining whether the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine applies, because they raise questions about the market conditions at the time of contract formation and thus about the propriety of relying on a regime of market-based rate authority at that time to produce just and reasonable rates. Although FERC "is not obligated to justify deviations from an approach suggested by its own staff," when "the conceptual underpinnings of the staff's approach" are "critical to a reasoned resolution of the problem," then FERC must address them. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n v. FERC*, 817 F.2d 858, 862-63 (D.C. Cir. 1987).

We conclude that FERC's decision to treat the market-function evidence as irrelevant to the question *whether Mobile-Sierra* applies, and its resulting application of the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine, was fundamental error. In a regulatory regime predicated on the grant of market-based rate authority, the decision whether to apply *Mobile-Sierra* to subsequent contracts formed under that authority requires FERC and reviewing courts to determine if the contracts at issue were initially entered into in fully functioning markets. FERC's application of the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine without considering the contract formation issues was error.

D. Effect on the "Public Interest"

FERC's error in its approach to deciding *whether* to apply the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption was compounded by its use of an erroneous standard for determining whether the challenged contracts affect the public interest. As our historical summary shows, electric utility deregulation has made it increasingly necessary for FERC to consider wholesale power contracts' effect on the consuming public. In its efforts to determine the impact on the public interest under *Mobile-Sierra*, however, FERC relied on the wrong

legal standard, applying factors taken from the context of a *low-rate* challenge rather than those relevant to the *high-rate* challenge present in this case.

As we discussed in Part II, state agencies in the past regulated heavily the rates charged directly to the public. Electric rate regulation reform, however, has significantly limited the role state regulators play and simultaneously increased the importance of federal regulation for the prices paid by retail ratepayers. FERC's increased responsibility for protecting the public's interest makes its obligation to ensure that wholesale rates do not unjustifiably adversely affect the public--always a part of FERC's statutory mandate--more important than it was when the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine first developed. Because, at present, FERC, not state regulators, "is perhaps in the best position to reach the most equitable result and to act in the public interest," *Miss. Indus. v. FERC*, 808 F.2d 1525, 1549 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (per curiam) (quoting *Middle S. Serv., Inc.*, 30 F.E.R.C. ¶ 63,030, at ¶ 65,151 (1985)), FERC must give predominant weight in determining whether to modify a contract under section 206 to the impact of a challenged wholesale contract on the rates paid by the consuming public who use the energy covered by the contract. Tested against this protocol, the agency's narrow conception of "public interest" review does not suffice.

FERC determined that the challenged contract rates did not impact the public interest principally because the local utilities presented little evidence relevant to the three public interest factors specifically mentioned in *Sierra*.[27]

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[27] In such circumstances[when the public interest test satisfies] [FERC's duty to ensure just and reasonable rates] the sole concern of the Commission would seem to be *whether the rate is so low* as to adversely affect the public interest--as where it might impair the financial ability of the public utility to continue its service, cast upon other consumers an excessive burden, or be unduly discriminatory. *Sierra*, 350 U.S. at 355 (emphasis added).

Order on Initial Decision, 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,397. Similarly, FERC's briefs in this court, assume, erroneously, that *Sierra* established a three-prong public interest standard applicable across all circumstances, an assumption with which we do not agree. In particular, the "excessive burden" reference in *Sierra,* heavily relied upon by FERC in this case in concluding that there was no impact on the public interest, has no application here.

As the text from *Sierra,* reproduced in the margins, demonstrates, the three *Sierra* factors were specifically identified as relevant to the *low-rate* challenge presented in that case. Rates asserted to be *lower* than those FERC would approve *ab initio* will not ordinarily directly affect the most obvious "public interest" underlying the FPA--namely, avoidance of unnecessarily high rates for the consuming public. That *Sierra* does not mention such a consideration is thus no wonder. *See Ne. Utils. Serv. Co. v. FERC* (*Ne.Utils.II*), 55 F.3d 686, 691 (1st Cir. 1995) (applying a broader definition of "public interest" in a high-rate challenge because "[i]t all depends on whose ox is gored and how the public interest is affected"); *cf. Permian Basin Area Rate Cases,* 390 U.S. 747, 783-84 (1968) (approving Federal Power Commission's setting of maximum rates because of the impact on the public interest). Indeed, the D.C. Circuit has characterized *Sierra* as establishing the rule that "a heavy burden must be met before a *customer* who has negotiated a fixed-price contract can be deprived against his will of the *benefit of his bargain.*" *Town of Norwood,* 587 F.2d at 1310 (emphases added). When a customer has negotiated a low contract rate, FERC must meet a high burden before raising that rate. By contrast, in this case, the customer is complaining of a *high* rate. The concerns in such a high-rate case are not entirely parallel to those in a low-rate case.

The primary "public interest" at issue in a low-rate challenge, such as *Sierra*, is in keeping utilities in operation so the public is not deprived of services. *Sierra* also mentioned avoidance of rates "so low as to ... cast upon *other* consumers an excessive burden." 350 U.S. at 355 (emphasis added). The reason for concern with "excessive burden" on "*other* consumers" is that charging rates in some wholesale contracts that are too low to recoup production costs and a fair profit could lead utilities burdened with such low rate agreements to recoup their costs and profit margins by charging higher rates than are just and reasonable to other wholesale customers. Such a burden is "excessive" because it requires third parties to pay for costs, including the cost of capital, that properly should have been borne by the consumers who purchase energy covered by the challenged contract. Contrary to FERC's supposition in this case, the reference to an "excessive" burden in *Sierra* did not signal that it is fine to burden customers with unjustifiably higher rates as long as those rates are not so high as to be "excessive" in some absolute sense.

In contrast, the key "public interest" in a high-rate challenge, such as this one, is assuring that the consuming public pays fair rates for the very energy covered by the challenged contracts. *Sierra's* limitation of relief to cases where "other" customers endure an "excessive burden" has no application to this direct pass-through concern. Instead, if a challenged contract imposes any significant cost on ultimate customers because of a wholesale rate too high to be within a zone of reasonableness, *see INGAA*, 285 F.3d at 31, that contract affects the public interest.

To be sure, the stability of contract considerations that underlie the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine do carry over to challenges by buyers rather than sellers. *See Mobile*, 350 U.S. at 344 (holding that no party may "unilaterally" change

contract because "preserving the integrity of contracts ... permits the stability of supply arrangements"). Those considerations, however, do not justify abnegation of FERC's statutory responsibility to protect the public from unjustifiably high rates in wholesale contracts.

The public interest standard, consequently, must be adjusted to give appropriate weight to that concern. In particular, in determining whether a challenged rate affects the public interest, FERC must take into account the Supreme Court's admonition that even "a small dent in the consumer's pocket" is relevant to the determination of fair rates. *Texaco I,* 417 U.S. at 399. In the context of a high-rate challenge, consequently, a high-rate public interest determination should focus on whether consumers' electricity bills have been affected by the challenged rates--not necessarily whether the electricity bills have increased since the signing of the contracts, but whether those bills are higher than they would otherwise have been had the challenged contracts called for rates within the just and reasonable range.

This is not to say that *any* direct impact on consumer rates is enough to demonstrate a public interest effect sufficient to displace the countervailing *Mobile-Sierra* concern with protecting the stability of contract. Market-based rate regulation presumes--appropriately--that a functioning marketplace will drive prices towards marginal cost, and therefore toward such a reasonable range, "at least over the long pull." *INGAA,* 285 F.3d at 31. Even if a particular rate exceeds marginal cost, however, it may still be within this reasonable range--or "zone of reasonableness"--if that higher-than-cost-based price results from normal market forces and is part of a general trend toward rates that do reflect cost. *See id.* at 32 (noting that brief spikes in pipeline rates "are completely consistent with competition"). Thus, the proper standard for the *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest"

mode of review in a high-rate challenge is not whether the contracted rates pose an "excessive burden" on consumers, but whether the wholesale energy contract is outside the "zone of reasonableness" and results in retail rates higher than would be the case if that zone were not exceeded. This standard mirrors that endorsed by the D.C. Circuit for determination of a just and reasonable rate under a market-based rate regulation regime, *see INGAA*, 285 F.3d at 31-36, and provides an appropriate context for the Supreme Court's "small dent" admonition in such a regulatory environment.

After reviewing the record carefully, we are certain that FERC did not properly assess the public interest of any of the contracts before it in this case.

1. *Snohomish*

Snohomish had already increased its retail rates by 35 percent to accommodate the payment of increased prices for power, averaging $125/MWh. Because Snohomish could not obtain forward contracts that allowed it to bring the retail rates back within a normal range, it appears that the contracts at issue did, in fact, impact Snohomish's customers. Contrary to FERC's assertion, it does not matter whether a rate increase occurred before or after a petitioner signed one of the challenged contracts. *See Order on Rehearing*, 105 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 61,986. In either case, the contract could cause customers to pay higher rates than they would have without the contract. Further, FERC specifically found that the challenged Morgan Stanley contract accounted for an eight percent increase for retail ratepayers over 2001 rates. *Id.*

2. *Southern Cal Water*

FERC acknowledged that the challenged contracts led to electric bills of $35.13 per month for some Southern Cal Water customers. FERC held, however, that Southern

Cal Water had not proven that such a bill "amounts to an *excessive* burden on the ratepayers." *Id.* (emphasis added). FERC's rejection of Southern Cal Water's claim because this increase did not amount to an "excessive burden," *id.*, is in error because, as stated above, the "excessive burden" standard, which referred in *Sierra* to the impact on third parties of a wholesale contract so low as to necessitate that costs be recouped from other buyers, does not apply in this case, and did not in any event sanction impacts on consumers as long as not in some absolute sense "excessive."

3. *Nevada Power*

Nevada Power's retail rates decreased after the challenged contracts were negotiated. *Id.* This circumstance, however, cannot alone determine whether those contracts negatively affected the public interest. The decrease from peak rates charged during the crisis does not show that the slightly lower rates that resulted from the forward contracts did not affect the public interest. It is entirely possible that rates had increased so high during the energy crises because of dsyfunction in the spot market that, even with the acknowledged decrease in rates, consumers still paid more under the forward contracts than they otherwise would have. FERC should have performed a more sophisticated economic analysis to determine if the challenged contract affected the public interest.

For the foregoing reasons, we determine that a remand is necessary so that FERC can apply the proper statutory standards to determine, first, whether *Mobile-Sierra* review of the challenged contracts is appropriate; second, if so, to apply the modified form of *Mobile-Sierra* review outlined in this opinion; and finally, if not, to apply full just and reasonable review to the challenged contracts. The petition for review is hereby granted. We remand this case

to FERC for proceedings consistent with this opinion.[28]

PETITION FOR REVIEW GRANTED AND REMANDED

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[28] Petitioner Snohomish also claims (1) that two FERC commissioners engaged in ex parte communications with wholesale energy sellers in violation of Snohomish's due process rights; (2) that these same communications violated the Sunshine Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552b; and (3) that certain evidentiary rulings of the Administrative Law Judge violated Snohomish's due process rights. Because our remand order requires FERC to consider the complaints again in the first instance, we do not reach these additional issues.

APPENDIX B

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
ALJ Decisions and Reports

NEVADA POWER COMPANY
and
Sierra Pacific Power Company
v.
ENRON POWER MARKETING, INC.
El Paso Merchant Energy
American Electric Power Services, Corp.
Nevada Power Company
v.
Morgan Stanley Capital Group
Calpine Energy Services
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.
Reliant Energy Services
BP Energy Company
Allegheny Energy Supply Company, L.L.C.
Southern California Water Company
v.
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L .P.
Public Utility District No. 1 Snohomish County, Washington
v.
Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc.

Docket Nos. EL02-28-000, EL02-33-000, EL02-38-000

Docket Nos. EL02-29-000, EL02-30-000, EL02-31-000,
EL02-32-000, EL02-34-000,
EL02-39-000

Docket No. EL02-43-000

Docket No. EL02-56-000 (Consolidated)

INITIAL DECISION
(Issued December 19, 2002)

CARMEN A. CINTRON, Presiding Administrative Law Judge

INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission designated this case for hearing to determine whether the dysfunctional Cal ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected the long-term bilateral markets, and if so, whether the effect was of a magnitude warranting modification of contracts entered into in the bilateral markets in California, Nevada and Washington. As discussed below, it is found that the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard of review applies to these contracts. Furthermore, it is concluded that under the public interest standard, Complainants failed to establish that the dysfunctions of the Cal ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected the long-term bilateral markets.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

2. Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company (collectively, "Nevada Companies") filed separate complaints against Duke Energy Trading and Marketing, L.L.C. ("Duke"), Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc. ("Morgan Stanley"), Calpine Energy Services, L.P. ("Calpine"), Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P. ("Mirant"), Reliant Energy Services, Inc. ("Reliant"), El Paso Merchant Energy, L.P. ("El Paso"), BP Energy Company ("BP"), American Electric Power Services Corporation ("AEP"), Enron Power Marketing, Inc. ("Enron"), and Allegheny Energy Supply Company, L.L.C. ("Allegheny") (collectively, "Respondents"). Southern California Water Company ("SCWC") filed a complaint against Mirant. Public Utility District No. 1 Snohomish County, Washington

("Snohomish") filed a complaint against Morgan Stanley.[1] The Nevada Companies and SCWC argued that the dysfunctions in the Cal ISO and PX spot markets caused long-term contracts negotiated in California, Washington, and Nevada to be unjust and unreasonable. Snohomish argued that the terms of its contract and the collateral annex are unjust and unreasonable. Complainants seek modification of their contracts.

3. On April 11, 2002, the Commission consolidated the above complaint proceedings and set the matter for hearing.[2] On April 17, 2002, the Chief Administrative Law Judge designated a presiding judge in this proceeding.[3] At a May 1, 2002, prehearing conference the parties agreed to a procedural schedule. Discovery commenced on May 29, 2002. Numerous discovery motions were filed and numerous discovery conferences were held in this proceeding.

4. On September 17, 2002, the Commission issued an Order Addressing Requests for Rehearing and Clarification of the hearing order.[4] In this order, inter alia, the Commission corrected the list of contracts set for hearing.

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[1] In this order, the Nevada Companies, SCWC and Snohomish will be collectively referred as ("Complainants").

[2] *Nevada Power Company v. Duke Energy Trading and Marketing, LLC*, 99 FERC 61,047 (2002) ("Hearing Order").

[3] Settlement procedures were initiated. The Nevada Companies and Duke reached a settlement agreement. On June 26, 2002, the Nevada Companies' withdrew their complaint against Duke. On September 30, 2002, Duke's motion requesting removal of their name and case docket number from the caption of future orders in the proceeding was granted. Consequently, the caption is now *Nevada Power Company v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc.*

[4] *Nevada Power Company v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc.*, 100 FERC 61,273 (2002).

5. On June 28, 2002, the parties filed their direct testimony. Staff filed direct testimony and answering testimony on August 6, 2002. Respondents' answering testimony was filed on August 27, 2002. On September 17, 2002, Complainants filed rebuttal testimony. The hearing was held from October 7-24, 2002. Initial briefs were submitted on November 8, 2002 and Reply Briefs on November 22, 2002. Initial Briefs were filed by the Nevada Companies; SCWC and Snohomish (jointly); Snohomish; Allegheny on one issue (real party in interest); the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada ("PUCN") joined by the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Nevada, Bureau of Consumer Protection ("BCP"); Morgan Stanley Capital Group; Commission Staff ("Staff") and Respondents (all including Morgan Stanley). All of these entities also filed reply briefs.

ISSUES

Issue I.

Whether Nevada Power Company, Sierra Pacific Power Company and Southern California Water Authority must bear the burden of showing that the challenged contracts are not just and reasonable under the Federal Power Act or that the contracts are contrary to the public interest under the Mobile-Sierra doctrine?

A. Parties Contentions:

6. The Nevada Companies assert that Mobile-Sierra applies only to long-term contracts filed with and approved by the Commission. The Confirmation Agreements (which contain the terms of the transactions-price, duration and delivery point) in this proceeding were not filed with or

approved by the Commission.[5] As a result, these companies argue, Mobile-Sierra does not apply since the Commission must be granted an opportunity in every case to judge the "reasonableness" of the rate. The Nevada Companies distinguish their contracts from those in Mobile-Sierra since the contracts at issue in this case are for supply from three months to one year, not ten and fifteen year contracts like in Mobile-Sierra.[6]

7. According to the Nevada Companies, the Commission has found that there is a "potential for the exercise of market power" and "a dysfunctional market place both in California and the remainder of the West." Moreover, the Nevada Companies contend that the Commission previously stated that any party that "believes any of its contracts are unjust and unreasonable... [t]o file a complaint under FPA Section 206 to seek modification of such contracts." These companies maintain the Commission has not applied the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard to contracts entered into in a dysfunctional market.[7] Thus, the Commission should follow precedent and examine the contracts here under the just and reasonable standard, the Nevada Companies argue.

8. In addition, the Nevada Companies contend that in a proposed policy statement the Commission made clear that, unless an agreement specifically states that the public interest standard applies, market-based rates will be reviewed under the just and reasonable standard.[8] In this case, the Confirmation Agreements do not include language

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[5] The Nevada Companies Initial Brief ("IB") at 4.

[6] *Id.* at 5.

[7] *Id.*

[8] *Id.* at 6.

adopting the public interest standard of review nor do they mention the "just and reasonable" standard. The Nevada Companies argue that their witnesses testified that they had no intention of waiving their right to challenge the agreements as "unjust and unreasonable," nor would they have recommended waiver of this right had the issue been raised. As a result, the Nevada Companies argue that the Confirmation Agreements should be construed as "demonstrating the intent of the parties to allow a just and reasonable standard of review."[9] Any other interpretation would be contrary to the Commission's proposed policy statement clarifying its own precedent, which provides that silence on what standard applies is to be read not against the buyer, but in the buyer's favor.

9. Further the Nevada Companies assert that Mobile-Sierra does not apply because the Western Systems Power Pool Agreement (WSPPA) is an umbrella agreement which does not contain the fundamental terms - price, duration and delivery point - for transactions under the "Service Schedules." The Confirmation Agreements are expressly distinct from the WSPP itself and Section 32.3 of the WSPP states that, in the event of a conflict between a binding and effective Confirmation Agreement and [the WSPP], the Confirmation Agreement shall govern.[10]

10. Additionally, the Nevada Companies argue that Section 6.1 of the WSPP limits the parties' rights to unilaterally amend the WSPP by providing it can only be amended by joint application to FERC.[11] If the parties had intended to limit their Section 206 rights, they could have

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[9] *Id.* at 7.

[10] *Id.* at 8.

[11] *Id.* at 9.

done so, the Nevada Companies argue and indeed have done so with regard to some contracts.[12] The fact that the Confirmation Agreements do not include language on Section 206 rights is substantial evidence that the parties did not intend to limit the Nevada Companies' rights under Section 206 or to be bound to a public interest standard of review.[13]

11. In addition, the Nevada Companies maintain that the Commission has modified "uneconomical" contracts under the just and reasonable standard even when the contract expressly mandates application of the Mobile-Sierra doctrine. Moreover, case law does not indicate a "completely consistent pattern" as to whether the doctrine of Mobile-Sierra applies where the contract is silent in this respect.[14] In this case, because of the effect of market dysfunction, prices for power were unjust and unreasonable, and thus, Section 206 obligates the Commission to fix a just and reasonable price, the Nevada Companies argue.

12. SCWC and Snohomish aver that nothing in Section 6.1 suggests that it was meant to preserve (or restrict) the rights of an individual party to seek changes to the rates, terms or conditions of a Confirmation Agreement for a specific transaction.[15] The Confirmation Agreements are not part of the WSPP Agreement, by virtue of the fact that Section 4.1, in defining "Agreement" excludes the Confirmation Agreements.[16] In executing its contract with

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[12] For instance, Snohomish's contracts with AEPSC, Calpine and BP, Mirant and California Department of Water Resources ("DWR").

[13] The Nevada Companies IB at 10.

[14] *Id.* at 8.

[15] SCWC IB at 5.

[16] *Id.* at 6.

Mirant, SCWC argues that it relied on the Commission's December 15 Order which mentioned the just and reasonable standard.[17] In addition, Mirant's conduct, by not adding a Mobile-Sierra clause to its contract with SCWC, indicates that it was relying on the just and reasonable standard, SCWC argues.[18]

13. The PUCN[19] avers that the just and reasonable standard is applicable to the challenged contracts at issue for several reasons.[20] First, the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard, developed under an entirely different set of facts, is inapplicable to the situation at hand, involving wholesale transactions based on market-rate authority, subject to a dysfunctional market, which was incapable of restraining prices at just and reasonable levels.[21] Moreover, these contracts were not subject to review by the Commission.[22] The market dysfunction negated the presumption that the market rates were just and reasonable, thereby invoking the Commission's independent duty to establish a just and reasonable rate, unconstrained by the Mobile-Sierra doctrine.[23]

14. Another reason supporting use of the just and reasonable standard in lieu of the Mobile-Sierra doctrine is that the Commission and entities representing third parties, that are non-signatories to the challenged contracts, such as

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[17] *Id.* at 7.

[18] *Id.* at 10.

[19] The PUCN and a number of other entities were allowed to intervene in this proceeding.

[20] PUCN IB at 3.

[21] *Id.* at 4.

[22] *Id.*

[23] *Id.* at 4-6.

the PUCN, are not necessarily bound by the doctrine.[24] In addition, the Commission, pursuant to the Federal Power Act, ("FPA") is under a duty to "make an independent assessment of the reasonableness of wholesale rates, regardless of the terms of the agreement between the parties."[25] Moreover, the PUCN, as representative of Nevada in utility matters, has standing to challenge wholesale power rates as unjust and unreasonable as applied to the Nevada utilities and their retail customers, and thus, the PUCN is not bound by the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard.[26] Further, the PUCN also avers that the parties retained the right to pursue unilateral contractual changes, pursuant to the just and reasonable standard of section 206 of the Federal Power Act, by not expressly waiving the right to do so under section 6.1 of the WSPPA, and thus, the parties are not bound by the Mobile-Sierra doctrine.[27]

15. The PUCN also contends that, even if the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard applies, "where contract relief is sought to safeguard the interest of third parties, the Commission is entitled to apply a more flexible standard in evaluating whether contract modification is in the public interest," and in this evaluation, the Commission should assign "great weight to the possibility that Nevada customers could be harmed by the indisputably high prices in the challenged contracts."[28] Moreover, a heavier than usual burden should not be applied.[29]

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[24] *Id.* at 6.

[25] *Id.* at 7.

[26] *Id.*

[27] *Id.* at 8-9.

[28] *Id.* at 12, 14.

[29] *Id.* at 14-15.

16. Respondents argue that this is the first time the Commission has ordered a hearing under Section 206 of the FPA of a complaint against a market-based rate resulting from freely-negotiated, bilateral contracts.[30] The record supports a finding that the Nevada Companies and SCWC agreed that contract modifications of the rates, terms and conditions would not be sought unilaterally, but jointly under Section 205 of the FPA pursuant to Section 6.1 of the WSPP. The parties did not agree to any other mechanism for contract modification and did not agree that either party could seek future rate changes pursuant to Section 206. The fact that parties did not agree to permit unilateral changes means that the Nevada Companies' and SCWC's unilateral proposals to change the contracts through the regulatory process are impermissible unless the Complainants can demonstrate that contract abrogation or modification is required by the public interest.[31] Accordingly, Respondents argue that the Mobile-Sierra doctrine applies to the voluntarily-negotiated contracts at issue in this proceeding.[32] Respondents argue that precedent supports their allegations.[33] Parole evidence of the parties' intent may not be introduced, Respondents argue. Moreover, even if extrinsic evidence is allowed, Complainants have not submitted affirmative evidence that the parties intended to allow application for unilateral changes to the contracts.[34]

17. The reason Respondents did not specifically raise the issue of unilateral rate filings or other special Mobile-Sierra

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[30] Respondent's IB at 1.

[31] Respondents IB at 9.

[32] *Id.* at 10.

[33] *Id.* at 9.

[34] *Id.* at 13.

provisions is easily explained: contracting parties need not include language explicitly restricting the rights of a party to file a complaint because "anyone bargaining in the shadow of the [Mobile-Sierra] doctrine would assume that a contract unconditionally setting a fixed rated, or a fixed rate of return, would be governed by Mobile-Sierra. In addition, the Commission has stated that the public-interest standard governs where a fixed-rate contract did not provide the moving party with the right to make a unilateral rate change under Section 206 and the evidence showed that the parties "did not even discuss" either Section 206 or the standard that would apply if a complaint were filed. These are the facts here, Respondents argue.[35] Additionally, contracts not at issue here have no bearing on the clear intent of the parties as expressed in Section 6.1 of the WSPP.

18. In this proceeding, Staff asserts that the appropriate burden of proof applicable to these contracts (except for the collateral annex in the contract between Morgan Stanley and Snohomish) is the public interest standard. According to Staff, this is gleaned from the terms of the WSPP and is confirmed by the testimony of those who actually made the deals. The participants in the WSPP intended to limit the possibility for contract modification to very narrow circumstances, otherwise a "deal is a deal."[36]

B. Discussion/Findings:

19. The Commission in this case set for hearing the following issue: whether complainants must bear the burden of showing that the challenged contracts are contrary to the public interest, or whether they will bear the burden of showing that the contracts are not just and reasonable. The

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[35] *Id.* at 14.

[36] Staff IB at 3.

Commission stated that even under a "just and reasonable" standard, parties who seek to overturn market-based contracts into which they voluntarily entered will bear a heavy burden.[37] On rehearing, the Commission stated that the evidentiary hearing was established to interpret Section 6.1 of the WSPPA and ascertain the parties' intent at the time the contracts were signed.[38] A short description of the transactions is relevant to this discussion.

20. The Nevada Companies contracts are fixed rate, over the counter, "brokered transactions," for "standard on-peak (6 x 16 blocks of power in 25 MW increments for delivery hubs in the West, such as Palo Verde or Mead) products."[39] Many are "locational basis swaps," and others are "sleeve transactions." Only two contracts with AEP are for more than one year.[40] Most of the contracts are quarterly contracts entered into for the third quarter of years 2002, 2003 or 2004, plus several one-year transactions. The prices of these contracts are varied, but all were at or below prevailing market levels.[41]

21. Snohomish issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) on December 22, 2000. Morgan Stanley was one of 17 suppliers who received the RFP.[42] Morgan Stanley was one of five suppliers who responded to the Snohomish RFP. Snohomish executed three separate contracts with three different sellers,

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[37] *The Nevada Companies v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc.*, 99 F.E.R.C . 61,047 at 61,190 (2002).

[38] Id. at 100 F.E.R.C. 61,273 at 62,047 (2002).

[39] Three 25 MW off-peak contracts with El Paso (2 transactions) and Enron (1 transaction) are not standard products.

[40] The two-year contracts were filed with the Commission. Ex. NEV-3 at 93 and 100.

[41] Tr. at 2645:14-17; 2656:16-20; 2709:9-15; 2288:3-12.

[42] Ex. SNO-4 at 5:6-8; Ex. SNO-5.

including Morgan Stanley. On January 26, 2001, Snchomish and Morgan Stanley entered into a power sales agreement (PSA) comprised of the WSPPA, a Confirmation Agreement, Attachment A (modifying the WSPPA) and a collateral annex. Morgan Stanley agreed to sell Snohomish 25 MW of around-the-clock energy for delivery at Mid-C for a period of 105 months (8.75 years) at a price of $105/MWh.

22. SCWC also issued an RFP sent to Mirant and five other companies.[43] Mirant and SCWC executed a long-term power sale contract on March 19, 2001. This consisted of two separate transaction confirmations covering on-peak and off-peak hours for a single, long-term sale of 15 MW of round-the-clock firm energy ("7 x 24 energy"). The delivery point being the Victorville substation in the South-of-Path 15 ("SP 15") zone in Southern California, with delivery to occur from April 1, 2001 through December 31, 2006, at a fixed $95/MWh.[44] After execution of the SCWC contract, on March 30, 2001, Mirant and SCWC agreed to a one-month transaction for April 2001, in which Mirant would buy back the 15 MW of power from SCWC at the spot price of energy at SP15 (using the Dow Jones Index) minus $20 per MWh ("SCWC Buyback Contract").[45] These contracts were entered into pursuant to the WSPPA.

23. The record supports the finding that the contracts at issue in this proceeding are contracts under the WSPPA. Moreover, the record supports the finding that the Confirmation Agreements[46] are part of the WSPPA.

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[43] Tr. at 2897:19-2899:9.

[44] Ex. MAEM-2 at 4:9-13.

[45] Ex. MAEM-2 at 4:13-17.

[46] These agreements are pro forma, the parties simply fill in the blanks to add their names, rate, length of service, and quantities. The WSPPA

Complainants' contentions that the Confirmation Agreements are not part of the WSPPA are meritless. Each contract consists of a Confirmation Agreement, the WSPPA and any amendments, which together form a single, integrated document.[47] Section 26 of the WSPPA states that amendments and confirmations constitute the full and complete agreement.[48] Section 2.2 of the WSPPA states that the WSPPA together with any applicable Confirmation Agreement, sets forth the terms and conditions to implement these services, within any applicable rate ceilings set forth in the Service Schedules, in conformance with FERC orders, where applicable. Additionally, Section 35 of the WSPPA states: "The Parties acknowledge and agree that all of their transactions, together with this Agreement and the related Confirmation Agreement(s) form a single, integrated agreement, and agreements and transactions are entered into in reliance on the fact that the agreements and each transaction form a single agreement between the Parties."[49]

24. The record is clear that Section 6.1 of the WSPPA allows parties to jointly seek modification of the rates, terms and conditions of the contracts under Section 205 of the FPA. However, the cited section does not have any language regarding the parties' rights vis-?-vis Section 206 of the Federal Power Act. None of the confirmation agreements, except the Morgan Stanley-Snohomish contract, address the

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contains draft Confirmation Agreements. (Sample Form for Confirmation, Exhibit C to WSPPA). Ex. NPC-14.

[47] Ex. NPC-14, Section 26.

[48] Ex. NPC-14, Section 26.

[49] Contrary to Complainants' contentions, Section 38 of the WSPPA governs changes to the WSPPA and its service schedules. Ex. NPC-14 at 56. Likewise, SCWC's contentions that Section 6.1 applies only to changes to the WSPPA is disingenuous.

parties' rights under section 206 of the FPA.

25. A summary of applicable law may be helpful in this regard. In the "Mobile" case a supplier of natural gas sought to unilaterally increase the rate of a contract filed with the Commission. In Mobile[50] the Supreme Court held that the Natural Gas Act does not empower natural gas companies unilaterally to change their contracts. This Court went on to say that by "preserving the integrity of contracts, it permits the stability of supply arrangements which all agree is essential to the health of the natural gas industry... The contracts remain fully subject to the paramount power of the Commission to modify them when necessary in the public interest."

26. In "Sierra,"[51] a supplier of electric power (a public utility) tried to unilaterally increase the rate of a contract filed with the Commission. The Supreme Court stated:

"But, while it may be that the Commission may not normally impose upon a public utility a rate which would produce less than a fair return, it does not follow that the public utility may not itself agree by contract to a rate affording less than a fair return or that, if it does so, it is entitled to be relieved of its improvident bargain.... In such circumstances the sole concern of the Commission would seem to be whether the rate is so low as to adversely affect the public interest - as where it might impair the financial ability of the public utility to continue its service, cast upon other consumers an excessive burden, or be unduly discriminatory."

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[50] *United Gas Pipeline Co. v. Mobile Gas Service Corp*, 350 U.S. 332 (1956).

[51] *Federal Power Commission v. Sierra Pacific Power Co.*, 350 U.S. 348 (1956).

Id. at 355.

27. Staff recites applicable law in its brief. Staff's arguments and review of the case law is persuasive. The law is clear: absent contractual language susceptible to the construction that the rate may be altered while the contract subsists, the Mobile-Sierra doctrine applies.[52] In the absence of clear contractual language allowing unilateral contract modifications under Section 206, the party seeking change must meet the public interest standard. In Texaco, the Court held that Mobile-Sierra applies: "Because nothing in the agreements suggests that the contracting parties intended to grant Mojave unilateral authority to modify shipment rates." Moreover, in Boston-Edison,[53] the Court held that "the specification of a rate or formula by itself implicates Mobile-Sierra (unless the parties negate the implication). The Commission has interpreted silence in contracts concerning section 206 rights as an implicit waiver of the buyer's rights to unilaterally modify contracts.[54]

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[52] *Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F. 3d 1091, 1096 (D.C. Cir. 1998). The language of the contract in Texaco, was similar to the language of the contracts in this case, and the Court held Mobile-Sierra applicable.

[53] *Boston Edison Company v. FERC*, 233 F.3d 60 (1st Cir. 2000).

[54] *San Diego Gas & Electric Company v. Public Service Company of New Mexico*, 91 FERC 61,233 at 61,851 (2000). See also, *Metropolitan Co. v. FERC*, 595 F.2d 851, 855 (D.C. Cir. 1979) (silence regarding FPA rights invokes public interest standard). In their reply brief the Nevada *Companies cite Alabama Power Co. v. FERC*, 993 F. 2d 1557, 1559 (D.C. Cir. 1993). This and other cases cited by Complainants are inapposite. As a matter of fact, the Nevada Companies' briefs exhibited a disregard towards proper citation of the applicable case law. The Alabama case is inapposite because the facts are totally different, dealing with a "formula rate" which required Commission "agreed to" review every three years. Moreover, the cited case is silent on the applicable standard of proof and precedes the Texaco case cited above. In addition, Complainants reliance on a recent Commission policy statement is not persuasive since inter alia, it would not apply to the contracts at issue in this case. See in general, *Pacific Gas and Electric*, 506 F. 2d 33, 38 (D.C.

28. Accordingly, it is found that Section 6.1 of the WSPPA does not negate Mobile-Sierra; therefore, the public interest standard applies. Nothing in Section 6.1 of the WSPPA, nor in the underlying confirmation agreements, suggests that the contracting parties intended to give unilateral authority to modify the contracts under Section 206 of the FPA. As a matter of fact, this conclusion is bolstered by the fact that the WSPPA does indeed address the parties' rights. Thus, Section 6.1 specifically provides that, under Section 205, the parties may "jointly" seek rate modifications. The inference to be made from the wording of the contract is that by agreeing to jointly apply for modifications, they excluded the possibility of unilaterally seeking modifications under Section 206 of the FPA. There is no language in the WSPPA or Confirmation Agreements allowing unilateral rate changes. In this case, the parties expressed their intent that the contracts could only be changed if jointly requested under Section 205. When parties agree to a specific, fixed rate in a contract, the Mobile-Sierra[55] doctrine applies.[56] The contracts in this case contain

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Cir. 1974) (a policy statement announces the agency's tentative intentions for the future). Moreover, the Nevada Companies mischaracterize the policy statement. To wit, in the policy statement the Commission stated that it was proposing to hold parties bound to a public interest standard only when both parties agreed to bind themselves in this fashion, stating that this is a departure from past precedent. Standard of Review for Proposed Changes to Market-Based Rate Contracts for Wholesale Sales of Electric Energy by Public Utilities, FERC Stats & Regs P 32,563 at 34,272 (2002).

[55] United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Serv. Corp., 350 U.S. 332 (1956) ("Mobile"); Federal Power Comm'n v. Sierra Pacific Power Co., 350 U.S. 348 (1956) ("Sierra").

[56] *Richmond Power and Light v. FPC*, 481 F.2d 490 (D.C. Cir. 1973); *Boston Edison Co. v. FERC*, 233 F.3d 60 (1st. Cir. 2000) ("Boston-Edison")

a fixed rate, thus Mobile-Sierra applies. As here, where the contract has not preserved the rights of a party to seek unilateral modifications, Mobile-Sierra applies in order to preserve the contractual expectations of parties by limiting modification only if the public interest so requires. This furthers the policy goals of ensuring that parties' expectations are respected and promoting stability of contract and supply arrangements. Mobile-Sierra applies unless the contract states otherwise.[57]

29. Staff witness Forman testified that the WSPPA itself or the rates, terms, and conditions of specific transactions can be changed in two separate ways. First, through Section 6.1 or through Section 34 which requires that the parties enter into Dispute Resolution before any other form of litigation may proceed.[58] Additionally, this witness testified that the drafters of the WSPPA could easily have added language to allow other ways of making changes to the WSPPA or the rates, terms and conditions.[59] This witness opines that the language of Section 6.1 of the WSPPA makes clear that the parties intended that transactions could only be modified as stated in the agreement (jointly under Section 205 or dispute resolution). Thus, the parties intended that the rates, terms and conditions of a transaction would be final, and not easily changed, once memorialized in a confirmation agreement.

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[57] *Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F.3d 1091, 1095 (D.C. Cir. 1998). See also *Town of Norwood v. FERC*, 202 F.3d 392, 400 (1st Cir. 2000); *Papago Tribal Util. Auth. v. FERC*, 723 F.2d 950, 953 (D.C. Cir. 1983).

[58] The Commission recognizing this in the hearing order, required the parties to submit to mediation before the hearing could proceed. *Nevada Power Company v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc.*, 99 FERC at 61,193. Duke Energy Trading and Marketing reached a settlement in this case as a result of this process.

[59] Tr. at 4513-16; Ex. S-1.

30. The unrebutted testimony of Dr. Perillo is entitled to substantial weight.[60] Dr. Perillo testified that contracts formed by the Transaction Confirmations and the WSPPA do not permit either party to make unilateral applications to FERC to modify the rates, terms or conditions of service. He states that under the maxim "expressio unius est exclusio alterius," (the expression of one thing is the exclusion of the other), the only interpretation of Section 6.1 of the WSPPA is that the parties thought about, contemplated, and provided for applications to FERC, excluding all applications not specifically provided for in the contracts. In other words, the parties agreed that unilateral applications to FERC would not be permitted under the contracts.[61] According to Dr. Perillo, due to the fact that the parties chose not to modify or supplement Section 6.1 (which only allows joint application to FERC) it is clear, as a matter of contract law, that there was no intent on the part of the parties to the Transaction Confirmations to allow unilateral applications for contract modification.[62]

31. The WSPPA contains no contractual language which may be construed as permitting parties to alter the fixed-rate contracts by means of a unilateral filing. Consequently, the contracts are governed by the public interest standard. The Commission has held that it will not read into the parties' agreements provisions that the parties did not include and courts have held that fixed-rate contracts fall under the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard if they omit express language granting a party the right to unilaterally seek

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[60] Ex. MAEM-1 at 7:8-10.

[61] Ex. MAEM-1 at 10:8-12.

[62] Ex. MAEM-1 at 13:5-9.

contractual modifications.[63]

32. Complainants argue that other contracts have specific reference to Section 206. Complainants' arguments are not persuasive. These contracts are not part of this proceeding. The contract is clear, it contains specific language concerning the rights of the parties to seek contract modifications. Therefore, the only rationale interpretation of Section 6.1 of the WSPPA is that it precluded unilateral contract modification. Moreover, Dr. Perillo's testimony concerning parole evidence is persuasive. When parties "have foreseen an event or action, such as application to FERC to change the rates, terms or conditions of service under transactions pursuant to the WSPPA, and have made some provision for it," as was done in the WSPPA with regard to applications to the Commission for contract modification, parole evidence may not be introduced regarding the parties intent as to unilateral application for contract modifications.[64]

33. Even though the above resolves this issue, the Commission in its Rehearing Order stated that it wanted a record developed "to interpret section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement and to ascertain the intent of the parties at the time the contracts were signed.[65] Consequently, intent will

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[63] *City of Lebanon Ohio v. Cincinnati Gas and Elec. Co.*, 64 FERC 61,341 at 63,445 (1993); *Power Authority of New York v. Long Island Lightning Co.*, 60 FERC 61,069 at 61,234 (1992). See Boston-Edison, supra at 65; *Union Pac. Fuels, Inc. v. FERC*, 129 F.3d 157 (D.C. Cir. 1997). See also *San Diego*, 91 FERC at 61,851-53.

[64] Ex. MAEM-1 at 12:15-20. In their reply brief, the Nevada Companies concede the point that since there is no ambiguity in the contracts, resort to extrinsic evidence of intent is not necessary. Nevada Companies RB at 10, n.6.

[65] *Nevada Power Company v. Enron Power Marketing*, Inc., 100 FERC at 62,047 (2002) (Rehearing Order).

be considered. The evidence in this case does not support Complainants' allegations concerning intent. Complainants' witnesses' testimony in this regard is not credible. Substantial evidence supports Respondents' arguments concerning this issue. To wit, Calpine witness Posoli, stated that there is an understanding among traders in the electricity business that once agreed to, prices and other terms are fixed and not subject to later modification.[66] In particular, in brokered transactions, involving standard products, the discussions are limited to the basic economic terms such as product, quantity, price, delivery period and delivery point.[67] This is corroborated by a number of trader telephone conversations played at the hearing.[68] Further, corroboration appears in the testimony of AEP witness William Reed, who testified that discussions regarding standards of review for future changes to the contract would have been highly irregular for traders or brokers.[69] Even Nevada Companies' trader Perry stated that he never considered section 206 and it never came up during negotiations.[70]

34. Furthermore, the arguments that Mobile-Sierra does not apply to the Nevada Companies contracts because they were shorter-term forward contracts[71] or SCWC's argument

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[66] CES-1 at 9-10.

[67] Tr. 3171-72.

[68] Exs. MSC 11; 135;136; 178.

[69] Ex. AEP-1 at 4-5. See also, Tr. 2734-39; 3166; 3181-82; 3260-62; 3334; 3500; 4155-56; Ex. MSC-21 at 10-12.

[70] Tr. 2337.

[71] The delivery terms of the Nevada Companies' contracts, in many cases were for a three-month period. However, the majority of the contracts would be in force for much longer periods, several months to several years. Under the terms of the WSPP, only agreements of one year or longer need be filed. Several of the challenged contracts had terms longer

that Mobile-Sierra applies only to a "low rate" case, are not persuasive. Mobile-Sierra does not distinguish the length of the contracts, whether the rates are low or high or whether the complaint is filed by the buyer or the seller. The PUCN's, SCWC's and the Nevada Companies' arguments that Mobile-Sierra does not apply because the Confirmation Agreements were not filed with the Commission are not persuasive.[72] The Commission has held that, in the case of market-based rates, the Section 205 requirements are satisfied by the Commission's determination, prior to the effectiveness of those rates, that the utility (and its affiliates) lacks market power or has taken sufficient steps to mitigate market power.[73] In this case, an initial review has already occurred under Section 205 when the Commission approved the WSPPA and found that all Respondents are authorized to sell power at market-based rates and that Respondents did not possess the ability to exercise market power in the WSPP.[74] Thus, the rates under the WSPPA are presumed just and reasonable.[75] Finally, the Nevada Companies' and PUCN's argument that Mobile-Sierra should not apply because the

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than one year and were filed with and accepted by the Commission. Respondents' IB at 5, n.12.

[72] The Nevada Companies cite Florida Power and Light Company, 67 FERC 61, 141 (1994). This case is inapposite since it applies to initial Commission review under Section 205. This is not the case here.

[73] See, e.g. San Diego Gas and Electric Company, 91 FERC at 61,853 (applied the public interest standard to a "high rate" case where the buyer was seeking to decrease the rate). ("California Refund Proceeding")

[74] The WSPPA and pro forma Confirmation Agreements set guidelines for the development of contract prices, setting market based rates or rates under established price caps. As Staff appropriately points out, as long as the contract prices at issue fall within these guidelines, which they did, they are entitled to a presumption of justness and reasonableness. Staff RB at 4.

[75] *California v. British Columbia Power Exch. Corp.*, 99 FERC 61,247 at 62,063 (2002).

market was dysfunctional is without merit. This is indeed the issue in this case, whether the dysfunctions in the Cal PX and ISO spot markets adversely affected the forward markets.

35. SCWC argued that the Commission in the California Refund Proceeding asserted that the just and reasonable standard would apply to long-term contracts. This contention is specious. The Commission did not make a public interest finding that Mobile-Sierra would not apply (as it did for instance, in Order 888).[76] Moreover, this hearing would be superfluous if the Commission had made the finding that SCWC contends. Nor is there a basis for applying a "more flexible" standard as the PUCN argues. The cases cited in support of the PUCN's arguments are inapposite, referring to initial evaluations of contracts under Section 205 and not to cases like the ones here where the parties to the contracts are seeking to change the rates.[77] Moreover, the hearing order in this case specifically referred to Mobile-Sierra and the just and reasonable standard. These pronouncements are binding in this case. Furthermore, the Commission has applied the public interest standard to challenges brought by non-contractual parties.[78]

36. Accordingly, it is found that the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard applies to the contracts in this case. In

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[76] See *Transmission Access Policy Study Group v. FERC*, 225 F.3d 667, 709-12 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

[77] *Southern Company Services*, 67 FERC 61,080 (1994) (Commission not bound, absent its consent, to a public interest standard of review when the Commission reviews an agreement initially). *PJM Interconnection, LLC*, 96 FERC 61,206 (2001) (a third party non-signatory to an agreement was significantly impacted if the agreement were to remain unchanged).

[78] See, e.g. *Public Utility Commission v. Sellers of Long Term Contracts*, 100 FERC 61,098, 61,396 (2002).

addition, it is found that the record supports a finding that the parties did not intend to retain for Complainants the right to unilaterally seek changes to their contracts.

Issue II.

Whether the dysfunctional California Independent System Operator (ISO) and Power Exchange (PX) spot markets adversely affected the Western long-term bilateral markets?

A. Parties Contentions:

37. The Nevada Companies assert that its witnesses established that prices in the Cal ISO and PX spot markets drove prices in spot markets throughout the Western System Coordinating Council ("WSCC"). According to the Nevada Companies, forward market prices are based upon expected future spot market prices.[79] The forward price will be equal to the expected spot price for the delivered power adjusted for the risk associated with uncertainty in the spot price, the Nevada Companies maintain. The dysfunctional spot markets strongly influenced forward prices in the West.[80] Additionally, the Nevada Companies assert that the dysfunctional Cal ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected forward market prices for energy to be delivered in years 2002 and 2003, to the extent that the dysfunction in the Cal ISO and PX spot markets was expected to persist.[81]

38. In addition, the Nevada Companies argue that the forward price curves provide proof that at the time the

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[79] The Nevada Companies' IB at 16.

[80] *Id.* at 18.

[81] *Id.*

contracts were executed, market participants expected dysfunction to continue at least through 2002 and possibly into 2003.[82] These forward price curves show that forward market prices remained high until the Commission acted in the spring and summer of 2001 to mitigate the impact of spot market dysfunction through the imposition of price caps, when market prices declined dramatically, the Nevada Companies assert.[83] The actions taken by the Commission in November and December 2000 did not convince market participants that the Commission would eliminate the dysfunction in the spot market.[84] According to the Nevada Companies, statistical analysis shows that forward market prices had lots of movement when spot market prices were static, because the forward price changes anticipating future mitigation began to happen before the spot price changes took place. Thus, despite the obvious linkage, a low correlation could show, the Nevada Companies argue.[85] The Commission found that the April 2001 Order reduced prices in the California spot markets and, in turn, in the Western long-term bilateral markets, confirming the actual interdependence of prices in the two markets.[86]

39. Both SCWC and Snohomish assert that the spot market dysfunctions created hugely inflated expectations of future prices, plus administered a fatal blow to the liquidity of the forward markets.[87] Moreover, these companies maintain that FERC's attempts to correct the spot market dysfunctions by moving the loads of California's Investor

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[82] *Id.*

[83] *Id.* at 21.

[84] *Id.* at 22.

[85] Nevada Companies RB at 13.

[86] *Id.* at 20.

[87] SCWC/Snohomish IB at 10.

Owned Utilities (Cal IOUs) to the forward markets and a federal order requiring power to be sold to the Cal ISO during the crisis, led to even higher demand, less supply, and higher prices in the forward markets.[88] The forward price for a one-year contract (peak MidC) increased and by January 26, 2001, had increased by over 900 percent.[89] Both SCWC and Snohomish assert that prices available for long-term contracts during the crisis were two to three times over the long run marginal costs ("LRMC") and the forward price curves during the crisis projected that prices would remain far above LRMC for many years.[90] Even in periods of shortages, long-term prices should approach LRMC within the period necessary to construct new plants, two to three years. Indeed, in functionally competitive markets, most of the backwardation (i.e. the excess of spot prices over the LRMC) disappears within the first twelve to eighteen months of the forward price curve. However, both SCWC and Snohomish maintain that none of this happened in the Western markets during the crisis.[91]

40. The Western forward markets, during the crisis, also suffered from a severe lack of liquidity (an adequate number of sellers willing to conduct business), SCWC and Snohomish maintain.[92] The CalPX Block Forward and NYMEX forward markets collapsed as a result of the California crisis and very few sellers were willing to trade in the forward bilateral markets, according to SCWC and Snohomish,[93] thus eliminating the available choices to both

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[88] *Id.* at 10.

[89] *Id.* at 11.

[90] *Id.* at 12.

[91] *Id.* at 12.

[92] *Id.* at 13.

[93] *Id.* at 13.

companies. The volatility of the forward markets during the crisis period is further evidence of the pervasive dysfunction of those markets, according to SCWC and Snohomish. This volatility led to untenable deals for Snohomish and SCWC, because any delays in considering the contract terms would result in price increases, both companies aver.[94]

41. Additionally, these companies argue that price discovery in the Western forward markets was limited and subject to manipulation. For instance, these companies argue that California markets operated under secrecy, so that data was not readily available from these markets. Similarly, forward gas and electricity markets in other parts of the West were characterized by a lack of adequate market information. In addition, SCWC and Snohomish argue that the reported prices for both natural gas and electricity were purposefully manipulated and that sham trading artificially inflated forward market prices in the Northwest by as much as twenty-five percent. These companies further argue that the lack of reliable market data made it difficult or impossible for buyers to obtain reasonable prices.[95] Both SCWC and Snohomish conclude that the Enron manipulations reached beyond the California borders and influenced directly the prices that Snohomish faced in the long-term market.[96]

42. SCWC and Snohomish argue that the Commission has repeatedly confirmed the relationship between spot and forward prices.[97] In addition, they maintain that there is a direct and well-understood economic relationship between spot market prices and forward market prices. Spot market

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[94] *Id.* at 14.

[95] *Id.* at 14.

[96] *Id.* at 15.

[97] *Id.* at 16.

prices represent the opportunity cost of selling power in the forward markets, SCWC and Snohomish argue. As such, the inflated prices charged in the dysfunctional California spot market had a direct adverse effect on the prices at which sellers offered to sell power in the forward market. As a matter of fact, SCWC and Snohomish argue, the relationship between spot and forward market prices tightened during the crisis because the breakdown of ordinary market functions made it extremely difficult to predict the movement of forward markets based on anything other than the then current spot market prices.[98] SCWC and Snohomish maintain that the inflated spot prices inflated sellers' opportunity costs, pursuant to sales under long-term forward contracts, and that during the first three months of 2001, this caused sellers to offer inflated prices under long-term contracts.[99] A seller would not forego the inflated prices available in the spot market unless compensated by its prices for sales in the long-term forward market.[100]

43. These companies additionally maintain that the forward prices, during the crisis period, were also artificially inflated by the volatility and uncertainty in spot markets due to market dysfunction and market power.[101] Thus, the dysfunctions in the spot markets translated into dysfunctions in the forward markets.[102] SCWC and Snohomish maintain that the volatility in spot market prices effectively eliminated the spot market, including shorter-term forward contracts (as options to the long-term contracts at issue) because the prices were not only beyond the means of buyers to pay, but carried

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[98] *Id.* at 18.

[99] *Id.*

[100] *Id.*

[101] *Id.*

[102] *Id.* at 19.

the risk of financial ruin for buyers who tried to remain on the spot market.[103]

44. According to SCWC and Snohomish, the empirical evidence demonstrates that spot market prices affect forward markets. These companies maintain that the forward price curves underlying the SCWC and Snohomish contracts demonstrate that they were in fact a product of spot and short-term prices, and thus, Respondents' witnesses in effect conceded that prices in the dysfunctional California spot markets adversely affected the California long-term market.[104]

45. In a properly functioning market, current spot market prices will have a very strong influence on expected spot market prices in the near term, which declines over time, so that large swings in current spot market prices produce modest swings in the long-term forward markets, SCWC and Snohomish assert. However, according to these companies, the dysfunction of the Western power markets caused the relationship between spot market fluctuations and long-term forward prices to become unexpectedly strong. Since these markets were no longer responding to fundamentals, and because the liquidity of the forward markets had collapsed, reported spot market prices were the only reliable market indicator that market participants could rely upon, SCWC and Snohomish maintain.[105] As a result, these companies conclude that spot and forward prices were highly correlated. SCWC and Snohomish maintain that the principal cause of the dysfunction in the forward markets, namely, the expectation that no effective measures would be taken to

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[103] *Id.*

[104] *Id.* at 21.

[105] *Id.* at 22.

control spot market dysfunctions, remained until FERC finally acted in mid-2001 to constrain spot market dysfunctions.[106] Additionally, these companies contend that given the government indications at the time that no price caps would be forthcoming anytime soon, there was no reason to expect the high prices would decrease soon.[107]

46. SCWC and Snohomish contend that evidence submitted by Respondents indicates that they also were of the view that the dysfunctions in California adversely affected forward markets throughout the West and as a result their litigation position lacks credibility.[108] The dysfunctions in the California spot markets adversely affected the availability of power supplies in markets throughout the West, among others, by causing resources to be drained from other regions in the West, including hydropower from dams operated by BPA.[109] Moreover, SCWC and Snohomish aver that the dysfunctions in the California spot markets caused demand to increase in the Western forward markets as well.

47. Market fundamentals cannot explain the western market crisis, SCWC and Snohomish maintain. According to witness McCullough, market fundamentals accounted for only roughly half the increase in prices (on-peak spot prices in California were $90.93 - nearly fifty percent above competitive levels; off-peak prices were $45.52 - more than thirty percent above competitive levels). These results have been replicated in other studies, which conclude that market dysfunction and the exercise of market power were major contributors to the extreme prices observed in the California

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[106] *Id.*

[107] *Id.*

[108] *Id.* at 24.

[109] *Id.* at 26.

spot markets.[110] According to these entities, the only logical explanation for the persistent dysfunction of the forward markets in the WSCC is that market participants expected the spot market dysfunction in California to continue indefinitely, which artificially inflated forward prices far above LRMC.[111]

48. Concerning Respondents' witnesses, SCWC and Snohomish argue that the Hogan/Harvey analysis is fatally flawed because it includes dummy variables which artificially mask price variations during a period in which observed prices exhibited the "most extraordinary price change in the industry's history." Additionally, the study consists of "data dredging" that fails to provide any logical explanation for the obvious fact that spot and forward prices rose and fell in close parallel during the crisis period, selectively discussing only regressions which support their claims. Further, according to these entities, Kalt used bizarre assumptions, and thus produced bizarre results. For instance, Kalt compares the Cal ISO's mitigated market clearing price ("MMCP") from the California refund proceedings (using now discredited spot gas prices), with prices at Palo Verde; ascribes a value of zero to calculations for which there is no ISO data; and assigns a negative value to the MMCP minus market price calculations, with the implication that producers sold power at less than marginal costs.[112]

49. The PUCN argues that although, in order to prevail, the Complainants are not required to prove that market manipulation occurred, the record provides evidence that market manipulation in the West, in fact, helped create the

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[110] SCWC/Snohomish RB at 7-8.

[111] *Id.* at 13.

[112] SCWC/Snohomish RB at 19.

dysfunction in the western forward markets and is therefore, highly relevant to the issues in this proceeding.[113] Moreover, the PUCN argues that, for purposes of a complete record, the Commission should not make a decision in this proceeding until the investigation of market manipulation in the Western markets in Docket No. PA02-2-000 has concluded.[114]

50. Respondents, on the other hand, argue that Complainants failed to meet their burden and provided no evidence that the Cal ISO and Cal PX spot markets adversely affected the western long-term bilateral markets or the challenged contracts.[115] However, Respondents demonstrated that there was no nexus between the high prices in the Cal ISO/Cal PX spot markets during May 2000 to June 2001 and that the elevated prices were also observed (during the same period) in the forward markets of California, Nevada and Washington. Respondents maintain that the evidence in this case fails to demonstrate that dysfunctions in the Cal ISO/Cal PX spot markets adversely affected the WECC bilateral forward markets.

51. According to well-settled principles of law and economics, spot prices do not determine forward prices, Respondents argue. Rather, both spot and forward prices are affected by market fundamentals, namely, spot-market prices by current fundamentals and forward prices by expected future fundamentals.[116] According to Respondents, to the extent that any relationship or statistical correlation exists between spot and forward prices, such relationship or correlation is only reflective of the fact that these market

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[113] PUCN IB at 15-16.

[114] *Id.* at 17-18.

[115] Respondents IB at 15.

[116] *Id.* at 17.

fundamentals may coincidently be moving in the same direction at various points in time. Forward market prices are driven by expectations of future market fundamentals, not current or past dysfunctions in the spot markets, Respondents argue.[117] The record demonstrates that both spot and forward market fundamentals changed dramatically between early and mid-2001, leading to large declines in both then-current spot prices and forward prices by mid-2001 which were not related to the dysfunctions in the California spot markets or to Commission actions addressing those dysfunctions, Respondents maintain. Respondents state that forward prices during years 2000 and 2001 are entirely consistent with then expected market fundamentals.[118]

52. The elevated prices experienced in the forward markets were the product of market fundamentals, Respondents aver. They argue that following years of low wholesale electricity prices and little system disruption in the western U.S. electricity markets, beginning in mid-2000, the region suddenly experienced major changes in demand and supply fundamentals. There was a shortage for much of the period between mid-2000 and mid-2001, i.e., reserve margins were well below both forecast and historical reserve margins and were accompanied by significantly elevated hourly and daily electricity prices. This resulting crisis, Respondents argue, was simply booming demand running into limited and aging supply sources exacerbated by counterproductive regulatory policies (particularly in California).[119]

53. Morgan Stanley also alleges that the purchasing

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[117] *Id.*

[118] *Id.*

[119] *Id.* at 18.

activities of the DWR brought a creditworthy buyer to the California spot markets and probably worked to abate spot market prices in California beginning in the late winter/early spring of 2001.[120] In addition, Morgan Stanley alleges that DWR's decision to hedge a large portion of California's demand in the forward market likely increased forward prices relative to expected future spot prices.[121] Additionally, Respondents aver that while Complainants argue market power and market manipulation, their generalized allegations fail to meet their burden and they are not relevant or probative to the core issue set for hearing.

54. Staff avers that the Commission found the dysfunctions in California to be the result of three factors. One, the "central cause," was an over-reliance on the day-ahead spot market. Two was the impact of competitive market forces or market fundamentals. Third, a potential cause, about which it could not be sure, was the exercise of market manipulation and market power. The Commission recognized that competitive market forces would continue to impact prices. Staff asserts that Complainants contend that something other than market fundamentals must have caused the high prices of forward contracts. However, Staff maintains that Complainants have failed to substantiate their claims, that their claims offer unsupported opinions of witnesses, and that their cases are distinguished more by the information they lack than by what they show. According to Staff, Complainants failed to analyze how competitive market factors affected forward prices and they did not conduct studies on the effects of the dysfunction on prices. Complainants offered flawed studies that even if accurate, show only a rough correlation between spot and forward prices, not a cause-and-effect relationship, Staff maintains.

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[120] Ex. MSC-65 at 54:10-16.

[121] Ex. MSC-65 at 53:11-54:2.

Thus, Staff asserts that Complainants have not demonstrated that the spot market dysfunction had any adverse impact on forward prices, or if it did, what that impact was.

B. Discussion/Findings:

55. Staff presents a chronology of events worth repeating as an aid to understanding the issues in this case. On July 26, 2000, the Commission issued an order initiating an investigation of the conditions of bulk power markets in various regions of the country.[122] On August 2, 2000, San Diego Gas & Electric Company filed a complaint, requesting that the Commission impose a $250 price cap for sales into the Cal ISO and Cal PX spot markets. The Commission denied the request in an order issued August 23, 2000.[123] The Commission instituted hearing procedures to investigate the justness and reasonableness of the rates of public utility sellers into the ISO and PX markets. The hearing was held in abeyance pending completion of the Staff fact-finding investigation of the conditions of bulk power markets.[124]

56. The fact-finding investigation of California markets was completed in October.[125] The Staff Report identified three factors that contributed to high electricity prices in the summer of 2000. First, market forces in the form of significantly increased power production costs combined with increased demand, due to unusually high temperatures and a scarcity of available generation resources, played a major role. Second, existing market rules exacerbated the

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[122] *Order Directing Staff Investigation*, 92 FERC 61,160 (2000).

[123] *San Diego Gas & Electric Co.*, 92 FERC 61,172, at 61,606 (2000).

[124] Staff IB at 10.

[125] Staff Report on Western Markets and the Causes of the Summer 2000 Price Abnormalities - Part I, (November 1, 2000).

situation by exposing the three investor-owned utilities in California to the volatility of the spot market without providing the opportunity to mitigate the price volatility. These market rules promoted underscheduling in the PX, thereby increasing the amount of demand and supply that appeared in the ISO's real-time market. Third, the Staff Report noted evidence suggesting that sellers had the potential to exercise market power, although there was insufficient data to make determinations about the exercise of market power by individual sellers.[126]

57. The Commission issued an order on November 1, 2000, proposing measures to address the dysfunctions in the California market and remedy the problems identified in the Staff Report.[127] The Commission specifically identified the following rules and regulatory policies as flawed: the CPUC's requirement that the three California IOUs buy and sell all their energy needs through the PX; the CPUC restrictions on the IOUs' ability to contract forward; the lack of retail demand responsiveness; underscheduling due to the ISO's replacement reserves policies.[128]

58. The November 1 Order distinguished between market dysfunctions and supply and demand variables, such as increased power production costs, scarcity of available generation resources, and increased demand due to unusually high temperatures.[129] Relying on the Staff Report, the Commission noted that the following competitive market forces affected energy prices in California: the increased cost

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[126] Staff IB at 11-12.

[127] *San Diego Gas & Electric Co.*, 93 FERC 61,121 at 61,349 (2000) ("November 1 Order").

[128] *Id.* at 61,354-5.

[129] *Id.* at 61,353-4.

of fuel, emission credits, and O&M expenses; sustained higher demand resulting in the use of higher cost generating resources and reduced hydro power supply due to drought.[130] The Commission concluded that competitive market forces played a major role in the increase in energy prices in California.[131]

59. The Commission noted that the dysfunctional market structure and rules provided the opportunity for sellers to exercise market power when supply was tight.[132] However, based on the information available to it at that time, the Commission was not able to determine whether individual sellers actually had exercised market power.[133] Furthermore, the Commission stated:

> This summer's wholesale markets exhibited certain market fundamentals that would be expected to cause prices to rise. Input costs increased as the cost of fuel, emission credits and O&M expenses increased. Sustained demand increased, requiring increased reliance on generating resources that would have been more expensive to operate even if input prices had not increased. Conditions in the Northwest decreased amounts of hydropower supply usually available to the market which, combined with a failure to bring new generation into service over the last decade, resulted in a true scarcity of generation. In circumstances like this, prices are expected to rise-and indeed they must rise to induce the investment

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[130] *Id.* at 61,358-9.

[131] *Id.* at 61,354; Staff IB at 12.

[132] November 1 Order at 61,350.

[133] *Id.* at 61,355; Staff IB at 12.

in new capacity that is needed to serve customers adequately.[134]

60. The Commission further stated:

> We conclude that certain market rules do interfere with the functioning of the market and, taken together, may permit sellers to exercise market power. Accordingly, these market rules must be revised. Many of the market dysfunctions in California and the exposure of California consumers to high prices can be traced directly to an over reliance on spot markets. Industries that are either capital intensive or that have a lack of demand response do not rely solely on spot markets where volatility is to be expected. Because the price risks inherent in spot markets are too great for both suppliers and consumers, these market sectors will prefer to manage their risk profiles through forward contracts. However, in California certain market rules imposed by AB 1890 and its implementation by the California Commission (e.g. mandatory buy-sell through the PX) prevented the IOUs from engaging in forward contracts to any significant degree. And other retail suppliers who would have been free to implement appropriate risk management strategies could not be induced to participate in California's market because the low retail rate, frozen at 10 percent below historical levels, thwarted competitive opportunities for new participants to enter the market. Even so, until the market was stressed this summer by extreme events, pricing volatility was isolated and short-lived and

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[134] November 1 Order at 61,358-9.

> wholesale prices were so low that stranded costs were paid off more quickly than expected. The significant failings of this market design became apparent only as peak demand outstripped supply.[135]

61. Having found that the existing market structure and market rules, in conjunction with an imbalance of supply and demand in California, caused and would continue to have the potential to cause, unjust and unreasonable rates for short-term energy during certain time periods, the Commission proposed the following measures to "fix" what it described as the "market design problems:"[136] elimination of the requirement that the California IOUs sell all their generation into and buy all their requirements from the PX (the buy/sell requirement); establishment of a penalty charge for underscheduling (this penalty was later eliminated without being implemented);[137] replacement of the existing ISO and PX stakeholder boards with independent boards; requirement that the ISO file standard procedures to facilitate the interconnection of new generators or existing generators to increase their rated capacity.[138]

62. On December 15, 2000, the Commission issued an order adopting these remedies. The Commission stated that it was necessary to change some of the market rules "that arose from the original state restructuring."[139] Summarizing the November 1 Order, the Commission stated that "the central

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[135] *Id.* at 61, 359.

[136] *Id.* at 61,365-67.

[137] *Id.* at 97 FERC 61,275 at 61,227; Staff IB at 13.

[138] November 1 Order at 61,360-5.

[139] *San Diego Gas and Electric v. Sellers of Energy*, 93 FERC 61,294 (2000) ("December 15 Order").

cause of the exposure of California to high prices can be traced directly to a mandated over reliance on...spot markets. As we stated, between 1996 and 1999, California added about 700 MW of generation while its peak load grew by some 5, 500 MW. This coupled with reduced availability of generation from out-of-state and little demand responsiveness to price, leaves California's spot markets vulnerable to price spikes...".[140] The December 15 Order adopted:

- a benchmark price to provide guidance for assessing the prices of long-term electric supply contracts;

- market monitoring and price mitigation for ISO and PX spot markets, including a $150 per MW price breakpoint.[141]

63. To put the contracts at issue in this case in context, the Nevada Companies' contracts were executed between November 2000 to June 2001; the Snohomish contract was executed on January 26, 2001; and the SCWC contract was

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[140] *Id.* at 61,992; Staff IB at 13.

[141] Id. at 61,982-3. The benchmark for five year contracts for supply around-the-clock was $74/MWh. Id at 61,994. Subsequent orders were issued on April 26, 2001, *San Diego Gas & Electric Co.*, 95 FERC 61,115 ("April 26 Order") and June 19, 2001, Id. 95 FERC 61,418. The April 26, 2001 Order adopted further market monitoring and mitigation measures for the California markets, and proposed to extend those measures, to all Western markets. The June 19 Order recognized the success of earlier orders and noted that additional load needed to move from the spot to the forward market and that there was still inadequate supply in the West. To allow time for the conditions to be corrected, the price mitigation was expanded to all hours. The Commission took these measures to protect consumers and the economies of the Western states, with the caveat that "even though we view prices above the marginal cost of generation in these hours as a necessary reflection of the supply shortage at hand." 95 FERC 61,418 at 62,547 ("June 19 Order").

executed on March 19, 2001.

64. From reading the cited Commission orders, it can be concluded that the Commission identified specific dysfunctions in the Cal ISO and Cal PX to be the result of over reliance on the spot market. To wit: (a) the California-mandated requirement that the three major investor-owned utilities ("IOUs") in California sell into and buy form the PX spot market; (b) a chronic pattern of underscheduling load and generation in the PX's day-ahead and day-of markets; (c) problems with the governance of the Cal ISO and Cal PX; and (d) the lack of standardized generator interconnection procedures.[142] These orders also state that high prices in both the Cal ISO and Cal PX spot markets were caused in large part by "market fundamentals" and "competitive market conditions" and that forward prices would be based "on analysis and expectations" of these factors with respect to the future.[143]

65. For instance, in the November 1 Order, the Commission stated that there was significantly increased power production costs combined with increased demand, due to the unusually high temperature and a scarcity of generation resources throughout the West, and California in particular.[144] The December 15 Order notes with respect to forward contract prices that projections or estimates of future market fundamentals in California, in particular, natural gas and NOx emission allowance prices, "will heavily influence

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[142] *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. Sellers of Energy*, 93 FERC 61,121 at 61,359 (2000) ("November 1, 2000 Order"); *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. Sellers of Energy*, 93 FERC 61,294 at 61,992-93 (2000) ("December 15, 2000 Order").

[143] November 1 Order at 61, 354; 61,358-59; December 15 Order at 61,994.

[144] November 1 Order at 61,254 and 61,358-59.

forward prices more than anything else." [145] These Commission pronouncements are directly in contradiction with SCWC's and Snohomish's assertions that prior Commission orders had already determined that the Cal ISO and PX spot market dysfunctions adversely affected forward prices. Moreover, the Commission specifically stated that it had not determined that the forward markets had been rendered unreasonable or dysfunctional due to impacts of dysfunction on the Cal ISO and PX spot markets in its December 19, 2001 order.[146]

66. The evidence in this record reflects that changes in market fundamentals and competitive conditions drove spot and forward markets.[147] The following changes affected

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[145] 93 FERC at 61,994.

[146] December 19, 2001 Order, 97 FERC 61,275 at 62,222 (2001) ("the spot markets were the only markets in which the Commission determined that rates may be unjust and unreasonable." The Commission denied requests to extend price mitigation measures to forward markets).

[147] The testimonies of Drs. Hogan and Harvey and Professor Kalt are given substantial weight. These witnesses testified, among other things, to the effects that supply and demand market fundamentals had on the spot and forward electricity prices in the 2000-2001 period. SCWC and Snohomish in their reply brief attack the analyses done by Drs. Hogan and Harvey. It is noted that Complainants raised issues concerning the analysis performed by Drs. Hogan and Harvey and Professor Kalt for the first time in their reply brief. The timing is suspect, nevertheless it is found that their arguments are meritless. Drs. Hogan and Harvey did extensive analyses inclusive of many different variables to test the arguments of the complainants and to show that complainants have not proven that the dysfunctional California spot markets adversely affected the western long-term bilateral contract or the challenged contracts.

Complainants' arguments are based on the testimony of McCullough, which as discussed below is entitled to very little weight. McCullough's main criticism of Drs. Hogan and Harvey's studies is that it is too complex and his more simplistic analysis is better. Ex. SNO-63

demand and supply in the WECC including California during the 2000-2001 period: (a) significant increases in peak demand for electricity in the WECC, in particular in California in 2000 and early 2001; however, as a result of conservation, retail rate increases and reduced economic activity, peak demand decreased beginning in the winter of 2001;[148] (b) increased demand for natural gas, due to increased demand for electricity which resulted in increased spot and forward prices for natural gas in the WECC and in California in 2000 and early 2001; however, spot and forward prices for natural gas declined beginning in the spring of 2001;[149] (c) increases in emission allowance costs in 2000 and early 2001 in California's South Coast Air Quality Management District ("SCAQMD"); however, these leveled off and declined in late spring 2001;[150] (d) environmental restrictions on gas-fired generation in California in 2000 and early 2001, followed by government-

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at 105. His critique is based on his own bias that the long term prices "tagged" along behind spot prices throughout the period of the market failure." Id. For instance, McCullough presented only one set of results for his statistical model while Drs. Hogan and Harvey presented eight sets of results for their statistical model. McCullough presented two sets of price correlations for COB. Dr. Hogan and Harvey presented sixty-three sets of sensitivity cases for the price correlation results for COB. Tr. at 1449, 1478, 1476-78. Complainants did not prove that Drs. Hogan and Harvey were "data dredging." It is noted that in answering testimony, Drs. Hogan and Harvey critiqued McCullough's testimony. Afterwards in rebuttal testimony, McCullough criticized Drs. Hogan and Harvey and Kalt. Complainants cite Ex. EPME-31 for support of their allegations against Kalts' studies. However, this exhibit proves a totally contrary proposition, since it is Professor's Kalt's corrections to error in McCullough's testimony. It is found that the studies done by Drs. Hogan and Harvey and Professor Kalt are sound and statistically valid and thus, are more persuasive and entitled to substantial weight.

[148] Ex. MSC-65 at 5-13.

[149] Ex. MSC-65 at 19-28.

[150] Ex. MSC-65 at 28-36.

mandated lessening of these restrictions in the late winter of 2001;[151] (e) reductions in output from hydro, nuclear, and Qualifying Facilities ("QF") resources in late 2000-early spring 2001 with a return of QF generation output in early spring of 2001, and return of nuclear generation output in late spring of 2001;[152] (f) entry of new generation in California specifically and the WECC generally beginning in the spring of 2001;[153] (g) entry of the California Department of Water Resources ("DWR") into spot and forward markets beginning in early 2001, and DWR's purchase of thousands of MWs of electricity by the early spring of 2001.[154] All of these factors impacted spot and forward prices during the period at issue in this proceeding. Supply and demand imbalances, exacerbated by California's power market design had a significant impact on prices during the period at issue in this proceeding. Forward prices reflect underlying supply and demand conditions. Perceptions of continued tight supply and continued consistent demand increased forward prices in 2000 and 2001. Moreover, the abatement of demand and the appearance of additional supply put downward pressure on forward prices.[155]

67. Evidence in this case demonstrates that, in the spring of 2000, certain areas of the WECC experienced strong economic growth, unusually high temperatures and an increase in electricity demand.[156] In addition, demand levels in California in June and July 2000 were higher than in

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[151] Ex. MSC-65 at 36-37.

[152] Ex. MSC-65 at 13-19, 37-40 and 43-46.

[153] Ex. MSC-65 at 50-53.

[154] Ex. MSC-65 at 53-54.

[155] Ex. EPME-11A and EPME-11B.

[156] Ex. MSC-65 at 6:19-7:2. Clark County, Nevada was the fastest growing region in the US during this period.

previous years. Demand levels in the California-Mexico portion of the WECC in the latter part of 2000 and the first half of 2001 were above the prior years' levels, leading to capacity shortages which contributed to elevated prices during those months.[157] Demand levels in the California-Mexico region of the WECC stabilized during the second half of 2000. However, demand and energy consumption in the rest of the WECC exceeded peak demand in prior years during 2000 until February 2001.[158] The decrease in demand in late winter of 2000/early spring of 2001, reflected the slowing of the California economy, higher retail electricity prices and significant load reduction efforts.[159] The decline in energy consumption was reflected in forward prices.[160]

68. Generation supply during the period at issue in this proceeding was also affected by changes in market fundamentals. Supply levels in mid-2000 to mid-2001 were reduced as compared to previous years. There is evidence in this proceeding which is given substantial weight, that hydroelectric generation in California and the rest of the WECC began to fall in the summer of 2000, continued falling through the late summer of 2000, and fell below historical levels throughout 2001.[161] Starting in February-March 2001, WECC peak loads began to fall to levels below prior year levels, and energy consumption began to decline.[162] As a result of diminished Canadian and Pacific Northwest hydro supplies, imports of electricity into

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[157] Ex. MSC-65 at 5:5-6:17.

[158] Id. at 7:9-10; 9:1-10:12.

[159] Id. at 7:2-5; 8:12-16; 9:12-12:4. Bonneville Power Administration had load reduction efforts in the first half of 2001.

[160] Id. at 12:6-18.

[161] Exs. MSC-65 at 13:7-16:4; EPME-5, EPME-6 and EPME-8.

[162] Id. at 8:12-16; 9:12-10:12.

California diminished beginning in June 2000.[163] In addition, record evidence shows that nuclear generation in California was subjected to significant outages during October 2000 and May 2001.[164] Additionally, the evidence presented in this case shows that QF output was lower in the first half of 2001, due among other things, to the policy decisions of the State of California which prevented Pacific Gas and Electric Company from paying their QF suppliers and discouraged QF's from operating.[165] Evidence in this case also indicates that many fossil fuel power plants in and around California, ran considerably more often than they had in previous years.[166] This increased operation of these aging plants led to their increased unavailability which increased imbalances between supply and demand.[167] Moreover, this increased activity also increased demand for natural gas, with the result that natural gas prices also increased.[168] During this period of shortage, spot prices increased.[169] Spot prices continued to increase in the summer of 2000, with additional increases beginning in December 2000 as hydroelectric shortages significantly impacted the Pacific Northwest when the first cold spell hit. High spot prices continued until the spring of 2001.[170]

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[163] Ex. MSC-65 at 16:8-17:4; 40:10-43:6.

[164] Exs. MSC-65 at 37:12-38:7; EPME-36.

[165] Ex. MSC-65 at 43:10-46:2.

[166] Exs. EPME-6; EPME-7; EPME-35; EPME-36; MSC-65, Tables 18 & 40.

[167] Ex. EPME-1 at 38:16-41:8.

[168] Ex. MSC-65 at 17:13-18:7 and 38:8-12.

[169] EPME-9.

[170] EPME-1 at 41:10-16. Evidence in this record suggest that as generation in Southern California was within or at the margin for meeting load in California, when power could be wheeled into California, the cost of generation in Southern California served as a floor

69. One of the factors which influenced spot and forward electricity prices in the WECC during the period at issue in this proceeding is the price of natural gas and the underlying supply and demand conditions in the gas markets in and around California.[171] Gas-fired electricity plants in California were being run at high levels, pushing up demand for gas. This was being influenced also by the strong California economy and adverse weather. Tight pipeline capacity and upward pressure on prices in the gas supply basins in Texas, New Mexico and elsewhere, also affected natural gas prices for inputs to California gas-fired power plants. Prices for inputs to California increased gradually in the summer of 2000 and dramatically at the end of 2000 (above historical levels).[172] The evidence in this case reflects that the impact of gas prices on the level of electricity prices was large in the spring of 2001. This was due to the fact that California gas-fired thermal generation was operating at unprecedented levels and was at or below the margin for meeting load. In previous years, during spring, gas-fired generation in the West was likely to be running to manage local transmission constraints and was less likely to be on the margin setting regional electricity prices.[173] During the spring of 2001, forward gas prices were above historical levels and fell during late spring and early summer.[174]

70. Another factor which warrants consideration in the analysis of market fundamentals are emissions allowance

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on prices of electricity throughout the WECC. Ex. MSC-65 at 35:13-36:2.

[171] Ex. MSC-65 at 20:14.

[172] Ex. MSC 65 at 20:11.

[173] Ex. MSC-65 at 21:1-9.

[174] Ex. MSC-65 at 21:19-23:8.

costs and other environmental restrictions which limited the ability of gas-fired generation in California to respond to the reduction of generation output from hydro, nuclear and QF resources.[175] The increased reliance on these units escalated the price for NOx emissions allowances ($40-$200/MWH) until June 2001. [176] Environmentally-related operating limitations on gas-fired generation in California, such as annual run time limits and water outlet temperature restrictions, constrained the supply response of gas-fired generation to increases in demand and reductions in output from other generation resources.[177]

71. The evidence establishes that market fundamentals changed in the spring of 2001, causing demand to decrease and generation supply to increase. These market fundamentals contributed to the decrease in spot and forward prices, beginning in the spring of 2001. Therefore, Complainants' arguments that the Commission's mitigation orders drove spot prices down in California and the WECC are not supported by the record in this proceeding, especially in light of the fact that the Commission's mitigation order for the West was issued on June 19, 2001. Starting in April 2001, steadily declining forward prices indicated an expected decrease in future spot prices.[178]

72. The abatement of demand due to concerted demand reduction efforts and slowing economic growth in California brought forward prices down.[179] The reduction in demand[180]

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[175] Ex. MSC-65 at 29:1-7.

[176] Ex. MSC-65 at 32:1-35:2.

[177] Ex. MSC-65 at 36:4-37:8.

[178] Ex. EPME-11A; EPME-11B.

[179] Exs. MSC-65 at 63:18-23; EPME-1 at 51:15-18; EPME-11A and EPME-11B.

and the costs of gas-fired generation, affected both spot and forward markets. Forward prices for natural gas began to fall during the late spring and early summer of 2001.[181] The State of California ensured payment to the QF and capped emission costs, which reduced the demand and costs of gas-fired generation.[182] New efficient gas-fired generation began to come on line in and around California beginning in mid-2001, resulting in 2,688 MW of additional, lower-cost generating capacity by the end of 2001.[183] The added capacity helped relieve supply shortages, and pushed out the supply curve so that demand could be served with more efficient, cheaper gas fired units.[184] Forward prices fell with the expectation of new generation supply.[185]

73. Staff's and Respondents arguments that dysfunctions in the ISO and PX spot markets were caused by factors not influencing forward prices are entitled to substantial weight. The regulatory policies for the ISO and PX contributed to the conditions prevailing in the spot markets in 2000 and 2001.

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[180] Due to State actions securing payments for the QFs and capping emissions costs. Id. at 63:23-64:2.

[181] Ex. MSC-65 at 21:19-23:8.

[182] Ex. MSC-65 at 63:23-64:2.

[183] Ex. MSC-65 at 50:12-52:2.

[184] Ex. MSC-65 at 52:6-11.

[185] Exs. MSC-65 at 50:9-53:5; EPME-13A; EPME-14 and EPME-15; EPME-23 at 20. DWR negotiated 59 power purchase agreements by the spring of 2001 (after 2/1/01). This totaled 14,000 MW of capacity for power to be delivered in various amounts from 2001 through 2010. Ex. EPME-1 at 50:11-15. This evidence tends to show that a significant portion of the IOU's load entered into the forward power markets during this time period. The purchasing activities of DWR brought a creditworthy buyer to the California spot markets, which probably helped abate spot market prices in California in late winter/early spring 2001. Ex. MSC-65 at 54:10-16.

The restrictions placed on utilities procurement strategies limited their abilities to forward contract for their wholesale power needs. This created an over reliance on the spot markets and was the central source of many of the dysfunctions in the California market. Respondents' arguments that the California regulations left a substantial amount of retail load exposed to spot-market volatility, the IOU's bore substantial price risk, demand was concentrated in California's spot markets, demand was held off from the forward markets in the WECC and this meant that there were fewer buyer-side competitors in forward markets, are entitled to substantial weight. The Commission mandated correction of the distortion in its December 15, 2000 order.[186]

74. Complainants failed to establish that dysfunctions in California spot markets materially affected forward markets in the WECC, especially for longer-term contracts, i.e. at least one year or more. In addition, Complainants failed to provide any evidence that the Cal ISO and PX spot market prices drove forward prices throughout the WECC. Their argument that there is a critical interdependence between spot and forward markets does not establish that the effects of the dysfunction on spot markets drove or affected forward prices. Moreover, Staff's argument that Complainant's failed to identify and segregate that portion of the forward contracts' rates at issue, which is due to the effect of competitive factors from the portion due to other effects such as dysfunction caused by over-reliance on the spot market, is persuasive.

75. On the other hand, Respondents established that forward markets summarize future expected supply and demand conditions, current market fundamentals drive spot prices and expected future market fundamentals drive

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[186] 93 FERC at 61,992.

forward prices. Forward and spot prices can be expected to be linked only to the extent that spot markets summarize information from current supply and demand conditions which provide useful information on future supply and demand conditions. Forward prices are determined by expected future spot prices, which themselves are determined by expected future market fundamentals. The forward price curves at the time the contracts were executed only reflect that Respondents expected future spot prices to remain high.[187] As Staff points out, to the extent that current supply and demand conditions are expected to continue into the near and/or long-term future, there will be an interdependence between those fundamentals and forward market prices.[188] To the extent that future fundamentals change or are expected to change from the current situation, there will be less and less interdependence.

76. The Commission itself has recognized this. In the December 15 Order the Commission states:

> However suppliers also benefit from the stable revenue stream of forward markets and have every bit as much incentive to avoid the volatility of the spot markets as do purchasers. Moreover, suppliers will bargain knowing that the spot market's size will be greatly reduced and that next summer's spot prices will therefore not be fueled by frenzied buyers whose over-reliance on last minute

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[187] Forward prices reflect the market's expectation of forward prices, at a particular moment in time. Forward prices are determined by market fundamentals, including: the capital costs of new gas-fired generation, long-term interest rates, credit spreads, taxes and labor costs, the forward price of natural gas and other fuels, as well as the market's perception of long-term economic growth and demand-side management efforts. Exs. MSC-7 at 6:16-18; MSC-65 at 109:9-10.

[188] Staff IB at 22.

purchases have forced them to bid up the prices to obtain needed supply. Suppliers, of course, will be influenced by their best projection of next summer's gas and NOx prices. The cost of these vital imputs has risen steadily from about $2 MMBtu and $6/lb in 1999 to well over $50 MMBtu and nearly $50/lb now. Estimates of the cost of these inputs will heavily influence forward prices more than anything else. The rise in the cost of these critical elements will inevitably affect forward prices, but this will be based on analysis and expectations for next summer, and not last summer."[189]

77. As Staff points out in its brief, all the facts in this case point to the same conclusion: the rise and fall in spot and forward prices was in large part the result of market fundamentals or factors, other than "dysfunction."

78. Staff's witness, Dr. Ogur, testified that the effect of competitive market forces on prices is neither a dysfunction nor an adverse effect, but rather an effect that is supposed to be reflected in forward contracts. The parties that negotiate forward contracts rely on their expectations of competitive market forces throughout the term of the contract. This witness further testified that if high prices in 2001 were expected to continue due to the interaction of competitive market forces, it is efficient that these prices be reflected in the forward contracts.[190] The Commission said as much in its November 1 Order, wherein it described certain recent market fundamentals (i.e., competitive market forces) and explained that, "In circumstances like this, prices are expected to rise - and indeed they must rise to induce the

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[189] *San Diego Gas and Electric Company*, 93 FERC at 61,994.

[190] Ex. S-4 at 8.

investment in new capacity that is needed to serve customers adequately."[191] SCWC witness Taylor agreed, that to the extent market fundamentals affect forward prices, there is no adverse effect.[192] Complainants' witnesses admitted that they did not disagree with Dr. Ogur's testimony.[193]

79. Staff persuasively points out that after December 15, prices in the spot market were becoming less and less reflective of the dysfunctional market design identified by the Commission, and thus, more reflective of competitive market conditions. When the Commission issued its June 19, 2001 Order, the dysfunction of over reliance on the spot market had been greatly reduced, and fundamentals affecting the competitive market had begun to significantly improve. This is confirmed by the Commission's Order of June 19, 2001. In this Order, the Commission said:

> Specifically, the elimination of the mandatory buy-sell requirement and the elimination of the PX rate schedule have helped to turn the tide in eliminating California investor-owned utilities' chronic reliance on spot markets. The effects of the price mitigation directed by our December 15 Order and the actions of the State of California in moving to longer-term contracts and conservation efforts have had a significant dampening effect on prices. As a result, California investor-owned utilities no longer rely on spot markets for meeting the entirety of the needs of the electric customers they serve. California now forecasts that it will only rely on the spot markets this summer for

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[191] November 1 Order at 61,358-9, 61,366.

[192] Tr. 2987.

[193] Tr. 2830-33; 2985-87.

> about 20% of its on-peak energy requirements, as compared to 100% prior to the December 15 Order.[194]

This order also noted a dramatic reduction in gas prices and fewer generation outages in California as factors which had the effect of lowering energy prices in the West, and that prices for Western forward contracts decreased dramatically.

80. The evidence in this case demonstrates that forward markets, during the period in question in this proceeding, were competitive and not dysfunctional. Staff's and Respondents' arguments on this issue are found persuasive. In a competitive market spot and forward prices can be above LRMC under conditions of scarcity, just as they can be below LRMC during conditions of surplus.[195] In this case, where market conditions were tight, input costs were in excess of LRMC and sellers of power had opportunity costs that far exceeded LRMC.[196]

81. Respondent's assertion that the forward market is, in its economic essentials, not a market for power; but a market for insurance is credible. The forward market provides a contractual means by which buyers and sellers can lock in

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[194] *San Diego Gas & Electric Co.*, 95 FERC 61,418 at 62,546 ("June 19 Order"). El Paso witness Kalt testified that the Commission's efforts to shift demand from the spot to the forward markets had the effect of reducing buyer's exposure to the volatility of the spot markets, reducing opportunities and incentives to underschedule loads and generation, and improving financial incentives for generators to undertake the development of new capacity. Ex. EPMI-1 at 9-10

[195] Ex. MAEM-16 at 14:1-13. When supply is tight, prices in excess of LRMC can signal the market the need for new supply, or be a signal to the demand side to reduce consumption in the short to medium term. Ex. MAEM-15 at 13:18- 14:6.

[196] Ex. MAEM-16 at 14:6-9.

prices over an extended period, hedging and allocating risk to specialists willing and able to take on that risk. This statement warrants substantial weight. The evidence shows also that there were no meaningful barriers to competition among sellers in forward markets, with generators and marketers willing to sell power contracts forward, during the relevant time period in this proceeding. The evidence in this case establishes that the forward market was a well functioning market (functioning competitively and efficiently) during the period in question.[197] There were numerous buyers and sellers, the WSPP has 241 members. The record does not support SCWC's alllegation that there was a lack of adequate market information. Complainants and Respondents had access to similar and transparent sources of forward price information. Complainants could call market participants for forward price quotes, and monitor on a daily basis forward price sources such as Platt's and Enerfax.[198] The evidence shows that the forward market had parties with industry knowledge and that they had access to this knowledge. The evidence in this case further established that, during this period, the market reflected backwardation, i.e. prices in the short-term were higher than prices in the long-term. Respondents correctly point out that this case should not be analyzed with the LRMC since this ignores the fact that input prices and opportunity costs in the near term far exceeded the cost-based benchmark and the LRMC of new generation.[199]

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[197] Ex. EPME-1 at 62:8-16.

[198] Tr. at 2875:8-16; Ex. MAEM-68 at 82-83.

[199] Ex. MAEM-16 at 14:6-9. The SCWC contract has a levelized price of $95 over five-years and nine-months, reflecting the fact that Mirant could hedge the transaction at lower prices in the out years and had higher hedging costs in the near term (in excess of $95). Ex. MAEM-16 at 27:8-17; 33;13-19. The record does not support SCWC's and Snohomish's contentions that the LRMC in the West is $30-35/MWh. See MAEM-50 at 25.

82. The evidence in this case shows that the Nevada Companies made wholesale purchases of firm power from thirty-nine separate providers in 2000 and 2001.[200] In fact, Sierra Pacific reported purchases from forty-five to forty-seven separate providers in the same time frame.[201] Considering the number of sellers available, the preponderance of the evidence shows that Complainants had choices,[202] i.e., they were free to reject offers and turn to other suppliers. Evidence in this case shows that in 2001, the Nevada Companies doubled their wholesale power purchases from the previous year, buying in excess of their own sales to retail customers. It also sold more than four times as much wholesale power as it did in 2000.[203] As a result, it may be concluded that the Nevada Companies were net marketers of power. Official notice has been taken of the decision of the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN) which found that The Nevada Companies had acted imprudently with regards to some of these purchases.[204]

83. The record shows that there was consensus among the witnesses for both sides that competitive fundamentals affected spot and forward prices during the period in question in this proceeding. However, as Staff correctly points out, Complainants did not isolate that impact from other factors they claim affected prices. Complainants' witnesses did not measure any impact of dysfunction in the Cal ISO and PX spot markets, and they also failed to isolate

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[200] EPME-1 at 16.

[201] Id.

[202] Ex. RES-12 at 2.

[203] Ex. EPME-18.

[204] The Nevada Companies, Public Utilities Commission of Nevada, Docket No. 01-11029 (Order dated March 29, 2002).

the impact of spot market dysfunction on forward contract prices as compared to the impact of market fundamentals.[205]

84. The main witnesses for the Nevada Companies were Drs. Shepherd and Goldberg. These witnesses' testimonies are not entitled to substantial weight. Respondents' and Staff's arguments concerning these witnesses' testimonies are persuasive. To wit, Dr. Shepherd, who talks about market dysfunctions, does not offer a definition of "dysfunctions," yet he agrees it is not a clear technical term. Moreover, he states that he used it in the same manner as the Commission, while admitting that he does not understand exactly what the Commission had in mind.[206] Most significantly, these witnesses did not analyze whether market fundamentals contributed to price increases in the California spot markets and the forward markets in the WECC. Their conclusions are restatements of their second and third assumptions.[207] Additionally, these witnesses cannot state whether the shortage of power in California during the relevant time frame was caused by market fundamentals or dysfunction.[208]

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[205] The central cause of the exposure of California to high prices can be traced directly to a mandated over reliance on spot markets. December 15 Order, above. Staff persuasively points out that by June 2001, reliance on the spot market for on-peak energy requirements had dropped from 100% to 20%, so that dysfunction should not have been perceived as a problem in later years. Staff RB at 14.

[206] Tr. at 2770:16-2771:2.

[207] Shepherd and Goldberg assume that: (a) spot prices, reflected on their charts for May 2000 to June 2001, represent long-run marginal costs; (b) their charting of what prices should have been for May 2000 - June 2001 based on increased gas prices represents long-run marginal costs; (c) any portion of an actual price charged that is above their assumed long-run marginal costs represents dysfunction; (d) dysfunction accounts for significant changes in both spot and forward prices during May 2000-June 2001. Tr. at 2811:4-2813:11; Exs. NPC-40 at 26:8-28:2; NPC-40 at 31:8-32:9.

[208] Tr. at 2776:9-2776:15, 2787:19-2788:13.

Dr. Shepherd could not meaningfully limit the scope of factors that might be considered market fundamentals rather than "dysfunction." [209] These witnesses argue that spot markets drove forward prices because of market participants' expectation that the dysfunctions would continue into the future. However, they offer no evidence of the actual expectations of market participants to support this theory.[210] Furthermore, their rebuttal testimony is not determinative, since the bid-ask spread reflects, rather than explains the underlying market conditions.[211]

85. Shepherd and Goldberg rely on the argument that any time a price is above long-run marginal costs, the portion above long-run marginal costs is the product of dysfunction, market power or market manipulation.[212] These witnesses assume that $40 to $60 represents the long-run marginal cost of power during the relevant time period. However, these witnesses did not perform cost/revenue studies to assess the long-run marginal costs of producing power in California during the time frame in question. Moreover, they did not examine the marginal costs of any Respondent in this proceeding. This and other omissions were considered in determining the weight to be given to this testimony.

86. In light of the fact that there is unrebutted evidence in this record that the forward prices represented the seller's marginal costs, Shepherd's and Goldberg's testimonies are not entitled to substantial weight. The evidence in this case

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[209] Tr. at 2771:3-2771:8.

[210] Tr. at 2775:7-2775:20; 2801:13-21. The Nevada Companies' experts did not perform any formal surveys or studies on the expectations market participants had with regard to the continuation of dysfunctions into the forward markets. Tr. at 2801:23-2802:7.

[211] Tr. at 2766:23-2767:7.

[212] Tr. 2981:10-15.

shows that the sellers were buying power to cover their obligations in the same market.[213] As a matter of fact, Professor Shepherd agreed that prices in excess of his assumed marginal costs do not necessarily indicate dysfunction and could be a reflection of supply shortages.[214] Likewise, Dr. Goldberg[215] did not perform any studies to support his claim that there is a link between the spot market dysfunction and forward prices. In addition, he did not perform any study of what caused the spot market dysfunction.[216]

87. As Staff points out, Shepherd and Goldberg admitted: they did not study the causes of the decline of forward prices in the spring of 2001, they did not study the fundamentals outlined by Hogan and Harvey, and they did not analyze capacity shortages to determine if supply and demand factors were real or induced.[217] As Staff points out, Professor Shepherd presented unpersuasive economic analysis. The charts prepared by this witness try to depict a correspondence between spot and forward prices while the bid-ask spreads do not reveal results caused by dysfunction,

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[213] Tr. 2055, 2074, 2109, 2232-33; 4302.

[214] Tr. at 2769, 2824. Prices prior to the dysfunction rose above $60 and are currently below $40. (Tr. at 2823-24; 2828). Staff IB at 26. Competitive prices at any point in time can be above the LRMC because of scarcity or below the LRMC because of surplus, as long as, on average over the long run, they are equal to the LRMC. Ex. MAEM-16 at 14:1-13.

[215] This witness supplied statistical support for Professor Shepherd.

[216] Staff IB at 27. Tr. at 2801-02.

[217] Staff IB at 21, Tr. 2784-88. In their reply brief, the Nevada Companies agree that these witnesses did not attempt to measure the individual effect of each fundamental on forward price movements. The Nevada Companies' RB at 16-17.

but merely "reflect" dysfunction, in general.[218]

88. Professor Shepherd only studied one factor - the changes in gas prices, although he admitted that a number of competitive factors likely affected prices in the forward markets.[219] However, this witness did not study the market conditions in the California gas market during 2000-01, nor did he study gas market transportation infrastructure dynamics during the relevant time frame or analyze the impact of constraints (lack of pipeline take-away capacity in California).[220] Another flaw in Professor Shepherd's study was the lack of a supply factor in the study, even though he acknowledged that there was a shortage in the capacity of facilities available to produce electricity in California in 2000-01.[221] This witness did not analyze supply and demand variables.[222] Both witnesses testified that they believe that by adjusting the $40-$60 LRMC estimate by a factor for increased gas prices, they had done everything necessary to capture the impact on prices of all market fundamentals.[223] As Respondents correctly point out, these witnesses merely assumed what they sought to prove, namely, without basis, that all impacts of market fundamentals are captured within their adjusted gas price.

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[218] Staff IB at 25; Tr. at 2765-67.

[219] Tr. 2830-33.

[220] Tr. at 2765; Staff IB at 25.

[221] Tr. at 2775-76.

[222] Tr. at 2784-88. Further, Shepherd and Goldberg's analysis is flawed since they failed to analyze whether the lack of demand response due to retail price freeze exacerbated the actual and expected supply-demand imbalance and thus, increased the scarcity rents in the wholesale spot and forward market. Respondents' RB at 34.

[223] Ex. NPC-40 at 26:8-28:2; Tr. at 2776:9-15; Tr. at 2787:19-2788:13.

89. Professor Shepherd did not conduct any study to prove his claim that the forward markets were subject to manipulation, because of the number of suppliers. He did not study the number of active participants in the market at the time and he did not analyze whether any of the Respondents controlled or owned generation facilities.[224]

90. The main witnesses for Snohomish were McCullough and Mount. These witnesses' testimonies will not be given substantial weight. In so holding, Staff's and Respondents' arguments are found persuasive. McCullough concluded that spot prices drove forward prices based on simple regressions. McCullough testified to a certain correlation between certain bilateral spot and forward markets in the WECC during June 2000 through June 2001. The major flaw in this testimony is his failure to establish any casual link between the ISO and PX spot market prices and forward prices. Staff's and Respondents' arguments that correlation does not establish causation is persuasive.[225]

91. McCullough analyzed the bilateral spot markets at the California Oregon Border (COB) and Palo Verde, Arizona (Palo Verde) with data from Energy Market Report ("EMR"). He failed to analyze the ISO and PX markets or the forward market at Mid-C or SP-15 (the markets relevant to this proceeding).[226] The differences in the markets are important because the Cal ISO and PX spot markets were subject to price caps and breakpoints from December 2000 to June 2001 and the bilateral spot markets were not subject to

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[224] Tr. at 2753-54; 2755; 2771; 2778; 2767-68; 2788; 2789.

[225] The prices will move together if they are impacted by common market fundamentals, but move differently if the fundamentals are moving differently. Ex. MSC-65 at 111.

[226] The appropriate data related to spot market prices would have been the Cal ISO and PX.

these same bid caps. McCullough's analysis of the correlation between the bilateral spot markets at Palo Verde and COB to the forward markets at these same delivery points fails to analyze or prove that the centralized, dysfunctional Cal ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected forward prices, for instance at Mid-C. As Respondents' witnesses testified, a correlation does not mean casuality, and the statement that "spot prices rose, contract prices rose; spot prices fell, contract prices fell" does not prove anything by itself.[227]

92. Another flaw in McCullough's regression analyses is its failure to account for market fundamentals affecting spot and forward prices. This reveals its bias in his study on the estimated impact of spot prices on forward prices by creating a correlation that may not exist if market fundamentals had been included. As Respondents state, McCullough's correlation studies fail to show any correlation. McCullough did not test for serially correlated residuals, and his model uses a flat average annual forward price that would not be influenced by seasonal factors to predict daily spot prices (which would be expected to be influenced by seasonality).[228]

93. Drs. Hogan and Harvey analyzed McCullough's study and re-estimated his correlation model to adjust for serial correlation. Drs. Hogan and Harvey conclude that no

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[227] Ex. MAEM-50 at 18:19-22. For instance, Dr. Hieronymus explained that covariance of market fundamentals (gas spot and forward prices for example) likely does, explain that forward prices were high when spot prices were high, and that they fell at roughly the same time. Ex. MAEM-50 at 20:14-20.

[228] Exs. MSC-65 at 115:1-116:2; 115:8-116:2. His failure to test for serial correlation is so significant that the other Complainants' witnesses (Drs. Mount and Bidwell) admitted that they would not have run the analysis in a similar fashion. Tr. at 2200:2-2201:22.

significant correlation was found.[229] Additionally, witness Kalt testified that McCullough's model not only fails to establish that spot prices drove forward prices, but rather, it tests whether forward prices drove and explained spot prices.[230] This witness also testified that when McCullough's analysis is corrected for several statistical errors, the result shows no discernible impact of spot prices on the forward market.[231] Moreover, it is impossible to discern to what extent dysfunction may have impacted forward prices as opposed to competitive market forces.[232] McCullough's testimony is discredited by his own memo written to the California Attorney General on June 13, 2001.[233] In this salient piece of evidence, McCullough refers to the "NYMEX" prices (which he uses in his analysis) as "mysterious" and "questionable."[234] In addition, he writes: "with a fall in spot prices, we would expect to see some, but not a great deal, of impact on future prices."[235]

94. Snohomish's and SCWC's witness, Dr. Mount, contends that the spot price at Palo Verde was a statistically significant determinant of the forward price and thus,

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[229] Exs. MSC-65 at 116:19-122:12; MSC-65 at 122:17-141:2. McCullough discounts a $3300/Mwh spot price cited by Snohomish as an outlier (statistical aberration) hen it would contradict his findings. However, when analyzing the volatility in the market, he includes this outlier. Respondents correctly point out that this is not valid use of the data.

[230] Ex. EPME-23 at 22-33.

[231] Id. at 26-33.

[232] Id. at 36-47.

[233] This memo's "publicity" was a discovery issue in this proceeding. McCullough inadvertently disclosed it, notwithstanding the fact that it was confidential.

[234] Tr. at 1452; Ex. MSC-108 at 2.

[235] Tr. at 1452; Ex. MSC-108 at 3.

concludes that high forward prices for electricity can be largely attributed to the high spot prices during the period when the spot market was dysfunctional.[236] The major flaw in his study is that it fails to analyze the statistical relationship between the Cal ISO or Cal PX spot prices and forward bilateral prices at Palo Verde or in the WECC.[237] This witness acknowledged that there were no econometric studies in this proceeding demonstrating an econometric relationship between the Cal ISO spot market and bilateral spot or forward markets anywhere in the West.[238] Moreover, Dr. Mount admitted that he never included Cal ISO prices in his model of the relationship among Western spot markets and that his analysis did not show that bilateral Western spot prices could be predicted by changes in Cal ISO or PX spot prices.[239]

95. There are other flaws in Dr. Mount's analysis. Staff's and Respondents' arguments in this regard are persuasive. For instance, they point out that Dr. Mount fails to account for changes in market fundamentals, even though he acknowledged that market fundamentals provide at least "partial explanation" for increased spot and forward prices during 2000 and 2001.[240] Dr. Mount treated anything that

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[236] Ex. SNO-58 at 17.

[237] Tr. at 2208:11; 2209:24-2210:5; 2230:8-2231:5.

[238] This witness stated he did not analyze the Cal ISO spot market because these prices were subject to a soft price cap and actual data on market clearing prices is not publicly available. Tr. at 2242:25-2243:16. However, this directly contradicts the fact that he provides an econometric analysis of spot prices which includes "structural shift" variables to account for the unique characteristics of the soft price cap in the Cal ISO spot market. Ex. SNO-58 at 16:13-17:2.

[239] Tr. at 2230:15-22; SNO-17 at 74:13-77:9.

[240] Tr. at 2197:16-2199:5. The inconsistent accounting of fundamental factors that impacted spot markets in the West renders Dr. Mount's modeling unreliable for four Western spot markets.

deviated from "the normal seasonal pattern of prices" as a "surprise in the market."[241] Furthermore, Dr. Mount fails to specify a key variable: the expected price for natural gas (by using forward prices for natural gas deliverable at Henry Hub trading in Southern Louisiana) instead of forward prices for natural gas deliverable in California or elsewhere in the West. [242] Dr. Mount's testimony acknowledges that generators in California (i) may have paid actual prices for natural gas much higher than those reported at Henry Hub (ii) reported forward prices for natural gas for delivery points in California "significantly higher" than reported forward prices at Henry Hub and (iii) "it is extremely unlikely" that suppliers in California could have purchased natural gas on a forward basis at prices equal to reported forward prices at Henry Hub.[243] As a matter of fact, California generators did not purchase their natural gas at Henry Hub.[244] Respondents' and Staff's arguments are persuasive. They argue that Dr. Mount's acknowledgement of the realities present in the forward natural gas markets in California undermines the

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[241] Tr. at 2245:13-17; 2216:17-2217:2.

[242] Dr. Mount claims that he did this relying on Staff's report in PA02-2-000. However, in this report, Staff rejected the use of Henry Hub spot price data as a substitute for California delivery point spot prices because natural gas from Henry Hub is not delivered to California. In addition, in this report, Staff acknowledged that some sellers in the Cal ISO and PX spot markets may have incurred actual natural gas costs higher than Staff's recommended substitute natural gas price indices. Moreover, Staff's Report does not conclude that reliance on reported forward prices for natural gas at delivery points in California is inappropriate with respect to forward sales of electricity; it also expressly states that Staff makes no conclusion as to whether reported natural gas prices for delivery points in California "are inappropriate for structuring contractual provisions between two sophisticated parties bargaining at arms-length." Initial Report in Docket No. PA02-2-000, August 2002 at p. 58.

[243] Tr. at 2179:3-2180:6.

[244] Tr. at 2179, 2197. Ex. MAEM-61.

validity of using forward natural gas prices at Henry Hub as an explanatory variable, in a model, to explain forward electricity prices in and around California. Accordingly, Dr. Mount's testimony will not be entitled to substantial weight.

96. SCWC's witness, Dr. Taylor, did not conduct econometric or statistical studies. This witness agreed that prices in the long-term markets were affected by market fundamentals. However, he did not conduct any studies to determine how these factors may have impacted long-term contract prices.[245] He relies solely on his interpretation of prior Commission orders[246] and MIRANT's forward price curve.[247] This testimony will not be given substantial weight. Dr. Taylor's interpretation of prior Commission orders is incorrect.[248] Additionally, Dr. Taylor's conclusions regarding Mirant's forward price curves are unfounded. For instance, Dr. Taylor does not explain how the "expectation of high prices in the future can be attributed to dysfunctions in the Cal ISO/Cal PX spot markets, nor does he show that Mirant's forward price curve was, in fact, the expectation of continued dysfunctions in these spot markets.[249] Dr. Taylor admitted that Mirant's expectations about prices in the long-term

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[245] Tr. at 2962-63.

[246] Dr. Taylor asserted that prior Commission orders established that the dysfunctions in the California spot markets adversely affected forward market prices. Ex. SCWC-20 at 28:20-21.

[247] Tr. at 2961:1-5; 2961:24-2962:4; 2962:16-2963-12; 2967:28-2968:2.

[248] Respondents' IB at 41-42, Staff's IB at 23. Factually, the Commission made clear that it did recognize interdependence between spot and forward markets, but it has never decided that the dysfunctions in the spot market rendered forward contract prices unjust and unreasonable. *Pub. Utilities Com'n of the State of California, et al. v. Sellers of Long-Term Contracts to the California Dep't of Water Resources, et al.*, 100 FERC 61,098 at 61,396 (2002).

[249] Tr. at 2968:10-2970.

market was affected by market fundamentals and factors other than dysfunctions in the Cal ISO/CalPX spot markets.[250] Dr. Taylor conceded that one cannot tell by looking at price curves what expectations they include, or whether they reflect expectations about future dysfunctions or future market fundamentals.[251]

97. Snohomish also presented testimony from Mr. Bidwell. This witness did not conduct any empirical studies to demonstrate to what extent the drop in long-term prices in mid-2001 resulted from FERC's mitigation of the spot market versus changes in market fundamentals.[252] Additionally, this witness did not conduct any studies of the marginal cost of power during May 2000-June 2001.[253] Furthermore, the studies of marginal costs he accepted were studies of the spot market, not the long-term market.[254] This witness did not do any studies to demonstrate that the forward markets during the relevant time period were not in competitive equilibrium.[255]

98. The Nevada Companies' witness Schiffel did not provide any evidence concerning the impact of fundamentals. Schiffel admitted he had not done any studies quantifying the effect of market factors, such as generation capacity or weather conditions. This witness did no analysis to determine the scope of the impact of dysfunctions on prices.[256] In addition, Schiffel did not perform any economic

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[250] Tr. at 2962:16-2963:12.

[251] Tr. at 2967-72.

[252] Tr. 1294.

[253] Tr. 1300.

[254] Tr. 1347-48.

[255] Tr. 1328.

[256] Tr. 2488, 2524.

analysis regarding whether the forward markets were competitive during the period at issue in this proceeding.[257]

99. Witness Adams is a commodities expert. This witness did not know how Morgan Stanley derived its forward price curves[258] and he did not conduct any studies. However, this witness did admit that the marginal cost for a power marketer such as Morgan Stanley is the price at which it buys power.[259]

100. The preponderance of the evidence shows that the relationship between price determination in spot and forward markets, especially long-term bilateral markets, is attenuated. Therefore, it is not credible that dysfunctions in the California spot markets would have significantly affected the rates, terms, or conditions of the forward, fixed price contracts at issue in this proceeding. Notably, the dysfunctions affecting the Cal ISO and PX spot markets were not present in bilateral markets (short - term or long-term) in and around California.[260]

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[257] Tr. 2595.

[258] The evidence shows that Morgan Stanley relies on a variety of information sources when developing its forward price curve, including (1) bids and offers from existing electronic exchanges (e.g. Intercontinental Exchange, Bloomberg); (2) bids and offers from over-the-counter brokers (e.g. Pebron, Natsource); (3) daily mark sheets from Tradition Financial Services; (4) price levels gleaned from Morgan Stanley's trade activity that day and (5) price levels gleaned from reported trade of other market participants that day. Ex. MSC-21 at 15:16-16:5; Tr. at 4184:3-8.

[259] Tr. at 2082-83; 2104; 2109.

[260] Snohomish argued that Respondents' witnesses conceded that current spot prices determined forward prices. Snohomish's contention is meritless. Respondents' witnesses did not so testify. For instance, Mirant's witness Schaefer testified that Mirant's forward curves did not reflect then current spot prices. This witness explained that expected market conditions were the basis of Mirants' offer prices. Ex. MAEM-38

101. Complainants argued that sellers withheld production, that they exercised market power, and that there was a possibility of market manipulation. They did not offer any evidence in support of this. Moreover, the Commission in designating this matter for hearing stated that, in a separate proceeding, it was ordering an investigation of potential manipulation of electric and gas prices in the west.[261] Specifically, the Commission stated that this investigation would include whether there was improper behavior by sellers that may have caused prices not to be reasonable.[262] Consequently, evidence of potential market manipulation or the behavior of individual sellers was not developed in this proceeding.[263] This Initial Decision focuses on the issues mandated by the Commission. To wit: whether the dysfunctional spot markets in California had an adverse effect on the long-term, bilateral markets in California, Nevada and Washington. Thus, these allegations were construed as collateral attacks of the hearing order and not

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at 6:17-18; 7:3-4. Dr. Hieronymus testified that forward prices relate to expected future spot prices. Ex. MAEM-500 at 14:22-24; 4:16-22; see also Tr. at 4234:9-13; 4235:3-5 (Funk); Tr at 4265:10-12 (Greenshields). Exs. MSC-65 at 109:9-10; MSC-65 at 111:1-112:12.

[261] See *Nevada Power Company v. Enron Power Marketing. Inc.*, 99 FERC 61,047 at 61,191 n. 12 ("Hearing Order").

[262] Id.

[263] McCullough, for instance, testified that there was market power. However, on cross-examination, this witness stated that he had provided no documents, analysis or other evidence empirically showing that the forward markets were subject to market power or that the Enron trading strategies affected market prices in the forward markets in the WECC. Tr. at 1423:18- 1424:8. Additionally, witness Adams testified that he had no evidence that Morgan Stanely or Mirant inflated prices by either controlling supplies or withholding power. Tr. at 2113-14.

considered.[264]

102. However, it bears noting that these witnesses did not present any evidence of specific manipulation by any Respondents which impacted the forward markets generally or any contract at issue in this case specifically.[265] The allegations that the impacts of Enron's trading strategies, withholding and exercise of market power in the ISO and PX spot markets, inflated prices in the forward markets, were refuted by Drs. Hogan and Harvey,[266] Dr. Hieronymus[267] and Mr. Baird.[268] The allegations of withholding in the ISO and PX markets[269] did not contain any specific studies proving withholding by any Respondent in any market, spot or forward.[270] Moreover, no evidence was presented that any

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[264] SCWC and Snohomish open their brief with numerous references which they claim prove market power and market manipulation during the California energy crisis supported by extra record citations (e.g. Oil Daily regarding Avista; newspaper articles regarding reports on gas prices; recent initial decision in docket RP00-241-006). These unsupported allegations were not considered in this proceeding in accordance with the mandates of the Hearing Order.

[265] See, e.g., Tr. at 2762:16-20; 2768:8-18.

[266] Exs. MSC-65 at 54:18-61:19; MSC-65 at 68:7-106:15.

[267] Ex. MAEM-50 at 3:11-4:2; 6:12-11:20; 31:14-36:19.

[268] Ex. MSC-98 at 9:9-10:16; 12:16-14:22.

[269] Ex. SNO-60 at 29-41.

[270] Witness McCullough testified generators were physically withholding from November 2000-June 2001. However, his analysis was flawed and will not be entitled to substantial weight. To wit, McCullough acknowledged that many of the plants were old and did not run efficiently. He also acknowledged that environmental constraints could have affected their operational capacity. Tr. at 1402. Furthermore, he did not consider vintage in his calculations. Moreover, he did not look at NOx prices. Tr. at 1409; Ex. MSC-103. Finally, his analysis of plant availability relies on a study of "comparable" plants, instead of a study of actual plants. Tr. at 1414.

sellers actually engaged in discriminatory pricing regarding the contracts at issue in this proceeding. Finally, there is no evidence of the exercise of market power by any Respondent in this proceeding.[271]

103. The record in this proceeding establishes that Complainants did not perform any analysis regarding the impact of market fundamentals on the forward prices. Complainants' witnesses who tried to do analyses only measured one factor, and they did not account for all of the changing market fundamentals which impacted forward prices. Furthermore, Complainants did not provide any evidence that the Cal ISO and PX spot market prices drove the spot prices throughout the WECC. As a matter of fact, Complainants did not analyze the Cal ISO or PX markets. Instead, they analyzed the bilateral spot markets at COB and Palo Verde. This evidence only shows that the prices at theses two points were high.[272] Additionally, Complainants

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[271] It is noted that two Respondents (El Paso and Enron) are involved in separate proceedings to determine whether they have violated Commission rules. See, *Public Utilities Commission of the State of California v. El Pas Natural Gas Company*, 100 FERC 63,041 (2002); Enron Power Marketing, Inc., El Paso Electric Company, Docket No. EL02-113-000 (Order Establishing Hearing Procedures). Commission findings on these two cases may require further examination of the contracts in this case. Staff points out that "with regard to the investigation in PA02-2, if it reveals that a seller or its affiliate clearly engaged in the exercise of market power and/or market manipulation that significantly affected the forward markets at the time the contracts were negotiated, the public interest standard has been met and that seller's contracts should be reformed." Staff RB at 17. Pertinent to this also would be the fact that the Enron contracts with the Nevada Companies purportedly have been terminated.

[272] Respondents assert that the centralized Cal ISO and PX spot markets were subject to price caps and breakpoints at the time when the Nevada Companies' contracts were executed which did not apply to the bilateral spot markets in California or the West. They state that the assumption is that dysfunction in the Cal ISO and PX spot markets would not have

offered a model of bilateral spot prices at four locations in the WECC. This evidence establishes only that the spot markets at COB, Palo Verde, Mid-C and Mead were correlated, and that the spot and forward markets at Palo Verde were also correlated. However, this evidence is not related to the Cal ISO or PX spot prices. Complainants did not perform any survey or study to determine the market participants' expectations (concerning the continuation of spot market dysfunction).[273] Complainants did not prove what role any factors (including market fundamentals) had in the development of any forward price curves. As a result, Complainants failed to demonstrate that prices in the Cal ISO and PX drove the expected future spot and forward prices throughout the WECC.

104. Staff and Respondents are correct in that the prices in the forward markets, during the time the contracts at issue in this case were negotiated, were the direct result of competitive market forces at work in the marketplace. Reduced supply and increased demand conditions produced high spot prices. These supply and demand fundamentals, coupled with the expectations of market participants produced high forward prices. Moreover, there is no record evidence to support Complainants' arguments or any quantification of the effects of spot market dysfunctions on forward markets. Accordingly, it is found that Complainants have failed to prove that the dysfunctional Cal ISO or PX

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affected prices in spot markets elsewhere in the WECC that were not subject to any price cap or mitigation. Based on the evidence presented in this case, this assertion is very persuasive.

[273]Staff persuasively argued that Complainants cannot prove their case by arguing that market participants expected alleged "dysfunctions" to continue. Staff correctly states that after December 15, 2000, prices in the spot market were becoming less and less reflective of the dysfunctional market design identified by the Commission, and thus more reflective of competitive market forces. Staff RB at 18.

spot markets adversely affected the Western long-term bilateral markets.[274]

Issue III.

Whether the adverse effect of the dysfunctional Cal ISO and PX spot markets on Western long-term bilateral markets was of a magnitude warranting modification of contracts entered into in the bilateral markets?

A. Parties Contentions:

105. The Nevada Companies assert that its witnesses estimated the impact of the dysfunctional California spot markets on forward market prices. The witnesses calculated the forward prices for energy that would have been charged absent dysfunction in the California spot markets. These witnesses used the forward gas prices during the crisis period and the implied heat rates for the marginal generation units that market participants expected, during the pre-and post-crisis periods, to be dispatched for delivery of energy at Palo Verde during the third quarter of 2002 (Q3 2002).[275] The

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[274] Staff is correct that, in accordance with the hearing order in this case, Complainants had a heavy burden of proof which could not be met by artificially creating a presumption that high [current] spot market prices affected [future] forward prices and making Respondents overcome this presumption. Staff's argument criticizing SCWC's "theoretical" basis that current spot prices present the opportunity costs of selling power in the forward markets as fundamentally flawed is persuasive. Staff correctly asserts that the output of a generator is continual, and cannot be stored. Today's output can be sold in the current spot market, and tomorrow's output can be sold in the forward market for delivery later. According to Staff, an opportunity cost relationship exists between future spot sales and current forward contracts, i.e. both sales relate to tomorrow's output. However, there is no such relationship between current spot sales (today's output) and current forward sales (tomorrow's output), i.e. it is not the same electricity. Staff RB at 12.

[275] Id. at 28.

expected forward market prices for power were significantly less than the actual forward prices during the crisis period, the Nevada Companies conclude.[276] This approach is the same as that adopted by the Commission to establish benchmark prices for use in determining refunds in the Cal ISO and PX proceedings, except that it relies on heat rates estimated from forward market prices in the absence of dysfunction rather than upon historical rates for the units that actually cleared the spot market during the crisis period.[277]

106. Nevertheless, the Nevada Companies contend, in each case, the magnitude of the impact of dysfunction is measured against the marginal cost of the generation unit that was or would be dispatched absent dysfunction in the spot markets. According to the Nevada Companies, the estimates show that the difference between the forward prices and the actual prices ranged from $50 to $100/MWh for much of the crisis period or from 14% to 168% of the expected prices absent dysfunction in the California spot markets.[278] The impact of spot market dysfunction ranged from approximately $2,000,000 to approximately $7,000,000 per contract for a representative sample of the Nevada Companies.[279] As a result, the Nevada Companies aver that this significant difference confirms that the contract prices are unjust and unreasonable and warrant contract modification. Additionally, the Nevada Companies contend that if gas prices (as FERC Staff believes) were also inflated during this period the differential between the expected forward market prices absent dysfunction and the actual

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[276] Id.; NPC-40 at 24:10-29:7.

[277] The Nevada Companies IB at 30; NPC-40 at 29:6.

[278] Id. at 31.

[279] Id.

forward prices would be even greater.[280]

107. The Nevada Companies assert that Professor Shepherd's and Goldberg's analysis takes into account all of the market fundamentals and, while market fundamentals unaffected by dysfunction may explain some of the forward price changes observed during the crisis, they do not explain all of the price changes.[281] According to the Nevada Companies, the prices in the contracts at issue in this case were unjust and unreasonable because they exceeded the prices that would have prevailed in a functionally competitive market. Competitive rates, the Nevada Companies maintain, in a properly functioning market, would be roughly equivalent to the marginal cost of the least efficient, i.e. highest cost, generating unit actually dispatched to meet load.[282] Before and after the California energy crisis, the marginal costs of production in the forward market in the WSCC were approximately $40 to $60. During the energy crisis, increased gas prices may have caused the marginal cost of production to rise to a degree, the Nevada Companies assert. However, the prices in the Nevada contracts at issue in this proceeding are several multiples of any measure of the marginal costs of production, sometimes as high as $290 per MWh.[283]

108. The Nevada Companies contend that it is inappropriate to regard these high prices as reflecting scarcity rents because the system does not really permit a consumer response to these prices. These prices do not reflect a willingness to pay because there has been no

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[280] Id.

[281] Id. at 32.

[282] Id. at 33.

[283] Id. at 34.

demand side discipline in the market.[284] Additionally, the Nevada Companies argue that there is no evidence that expected physical scarcity caused all of the forward market price increases for power to be delivered in 2002 and 2003.

109. SCWC and Snohomish, in addition to making similar assertions to the Nevada Companies, further argue that forward market prices converge around the long-run marginal cost of production (in this case around $34 per MWh), and that forward prices will vary over time in a band within about twenty percent of the LRMC.[285] Accordingly, the zone of reasonableness for long-term forward contracts in the West would be from $28 to $40, SCWC and Snohomish contend.[286] These companies claim that one would never expect to see the prices contained in the long-term contracts signed by Snohomish ($105 per MWh for nine years) and by SCWC ($95 per MWh for 69 months) in a fully competitive market, because these prices are at least twice the LRMC of a gas-fired turbine. Additionally, SCWC and Snohomish argue that the price paid by SCWC is twenty-eight percent higher than the competitive-level benchmark established by the Commission in its December 15 Order, and this difference is attributable to the California spot market dysfunction, thus warranting modification of SCWC's contracts.[287] This is also applicable to the Snohomish contract, these parties aver.

110. Changes in the seasonally adjusted average monthly spot price of electricity during the California electricity crisis (May 2000 through Spring 2001) explained approximately

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[284] Id.

[285] SCWC IB at 28.

[286] Id.

[287] Id. at 28.

eighty to ninety percent, of the variation in forward electricity prices as a ratio of forward gas prices for the delivery months of August 2001 and August 2002. As a result, SCWC and Snohomish argue that the high forward prices for electricity that occurred when the spot market was dysfunctional can be largely attributed to the high spot prices.[288]

111. Evidence in this case demonstrates[289] that more than half the increase in spot market prices during the crisis period was attributable to market power, defined as the excess of market prices over marginal costs. According to SCWC, this is corroborated by other academics and the Commission. As a result, these complainants argue that the contract prices in this case far exceed any relevant measure of costs plus reasonable risk premium.[290] Respondents have not demonstrated that they incurred costs to serve Snohomish or SCWC that are near the prices they have received under the long-term contracts, therefore, the Commission should remedy the unreasonable effect on Complainants' ratepayers. Commission inaction would encourage continued market abuse, SCWC and Snohomish argue.[291] Morgan Stanley would not suffer a real loss but a paper loss amounting to about 0.12% of its net cash flow for 2001, which will be incurred anyway due to accounting rule changes. Moreover, these companies argue that, in any event if such stranded costs occur, FERC has taken steps to protect market participants.

112. As stated above, Respondents argue that

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[288] Id at 29.

[289] Id.

[290] Id. at 30.

[291] Id.

Complainants failed to demonstrate that the dysfunctional spot markets in California affected the forward markets. In addition, they argue that as a result, Complainants failed to adduce evidence of a magnitude warranting modification of fixed rate bilateral forward contracts entered into in the Western markets. Thus, Respondents argue that the Commission's long standing policy is to promote the stability of contracts and Complainants have not established any reasons for abandoning this policy. Respondents further aver, that the record overwhelmingly establishes that factors other than the dysfunctions in the ISO and PX spot markets explain the bilateral forward contract market prices at issue. Additionally, Respondents maintain that enforcement of wholesale power contracts is an absolutely essential element to attract investment by market participants. Potential market participants cannot effectively develop and finance new merchant generation projects absent certainty that their contracts will be honored, Respondents argue. Accordingly, Respondents contend that modification of the contracts is contrary to the public interest. Finally, Respondents aver that Complainants have not described the dysfunctions that allegedly adversely affected the forward markets, nor quantified the effects of any purported dysfunction in the forward markets on the contracts at issue. Since they failed to establish any impact, they have failed to establish an impact sufficient to warrant contract modification, Respondents maintain.

113. Staff points out that the rates, terms and conditions of the contracts in question are a reflection of the choices Complainants made regarding the risks they wanted to accept and the purchasing strategies they employed. Snohomish and SCWC elected to avoid price volatility and lock in below-market prices by entering into long-term, fixed price contracts, even though other options were available to them. The Nevada Companies chose to pursue an aggressive

purchasing strategy which was inconsistent with its own resource plan, by concentrating on buying relatively short-term contracts at any price, without considering the risk of future price decreases. Moreover, Respondents hedged the contracts by purchasing power concurrently with the sale. Thus, Respondents incurred or locked in high-priced purchases to meet their obligations. As a result, Staff argues it would be unfair to abrogate the contracts. In a competitive marketplace, each participant makes its own determinations regarding the manner and the extent to which current and forecasted changes in competitive market forces, as well as current and forecasted changes in regulatory policies, will affect price. In a highly volatile market, buyers use this information to determine how to manage risks (and how much of the risk to pass on to sellers). This ability to choose is, in fact, fundamental to any market-based rate scheme, Staff argues. To now go back and adjust, or make up for, choices and risk decisions that the buyers made in 2000-01 defeats the underlying purpose of competitive ratemaking. According to Staff, buyers and sellers in competitive markets should be required to live with the consequences of their choices, good or bad.

B. Discussion/Findings:

114. In the Hearing Order, the Commission directed record evidence on "the totality of purchases and sales and the conditions present at the time the contracts were entered into;" Complainants' overall portfolio, as well as their own sales, (pattern, duration, price); whether complainants' transactions were physical or financial in nature and designed to serve complainants' load; the terms, conditions and rate over the entire duration of each contract (e.g. whether the contract is front-end loaded); what other alternatives were available to buyers and sellers; whether, at the time, it was a reasonable decision to enter into these

contracts (e.g. duration, scope and time period, and the participants' expectations as to the duration of dysfunctions in the Cal ISO and PX markets); the terms and conditions of any request for proposals, and the process and procedures the Complainants used to evaluate the contracts, including any changes in offered rates, terms and conditions mandated or negotiated by the Complainants; and the relation of the contract rates to the Commission's previously identified benchmark for long-term contracts.[292]

115. In addition, the Commission indicated that the parties could present evidence on: the effect of the contracts on the financial health of Complainants; the effect of the contracts on wholesale and retail customers; the impacts contract modification may have on the nation's energy markets, including, but not limited to, impacts on investment in new generation and transmission infrastructure, and the effect on confidence in competitive markets; the willingness of market participants to enter into long-term contracts in the future and the prices and terms and conditions of such contracts; and the potential modification of other existing energy contracts.[293]

116. The Commission stated: "[t]he Commission's long-standing policy, consistent with a substantial body of Supreme Court and other judicial precedent, has been to recognize the sanctity of contracts. Rarely has the Commission deviated from that policy, and then only in extreme circumstances, such as the fundamental industry-wide restructuring under Order No. 888 and the reorganization of a bankrupt utility. Preservation of contracts has, if anything, become even more critical since the policy

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[292] *Nevada Power Company v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc.*, 99 FERC at 61,191 (2002).

[293] Id.

was first adopted. Competitive power markets simply cannot attract the capital needed to build adequate generating infrastructure without regulatory certainty, including certainty that the Commission will not modify market-based contracts unless there are extraordinary circumstances."[294]

117. Review of the "totality of purchases and sales" and the "conditions present at the time the contracts were entered into"[295] supports the finding that the contracts should not be modified. Complainants allege that they expected the market dysfunctions would last at least "indefinitely." [296] This testimony is not credible. In November 2000, the Commission issued an order proposing remedies for the California market. The Commission found there were a number of factors that contributed to the high prices experienced in California that summer: competitive market forces played a major role in the run-up of prices through significantly increased power production costs combined with increased demand due to unusually high temperatures and a scarcity of available generation resources throughout the West. In addition, market rules and flawed retail regulatory policies exacerbated the situation.[297] Specifically, the November 1, 2000 Order identified the following problems: (i) the CPUC's requirement that the California IOUs buy and sell all of their energy needs through the CalPX, (ii) CPUC restrictions on the IOUs' ability to enter into forward contracts, (iii) the lack of a retail demand response program, and (iv) underscheduling due to the ISO's replacement reserves policies. [298] In the December 2000

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[294] *Nevada Power Co. v. Duke Energy*, 99 FERC at 61,190 (2002).

[295] 99 FERC at 61,191.

[296] Exs. NPC-1 at 11;1-6; SNO-1 at 12:14-13:5.

[297] 93 FERC at 61,349-50.

[298] Id. at 61,354-55; See also S-4 at 3:5-12.

Order, the Commission adopted remedies to fix the rules in the California spot markets.[299] Therefore, the evidence shows that there should have been no expectation that dysfunctions in those spot markets would affect forward bilateral markets after December 2000. As the Commission explained in the December 15, 2000 Order:

> Some parties in this proceeding argue that the prices in the forward markets will be affected by last summer's spiraling spot prices and should therefore be deemed unreasonable. We do not agree. Sellers will certainly be aware that supplies of power are tight and that the IOUs are now aggressively seeking to avoid the exposure of the spot markets. Under these circumstances... we will be vigilant in monitoring the possible exercise of market power. However, suppliers also benefit from the stable revenue stream of forward markets and have every bit as much incentive to avoid the volatility of the spot markets as do purchasers. Moreover, suppliers will bargain knowing that the spot market's size will be greatly reduced and that next summer's spot prices will therefore not be fueled by frenzied buyers whose over-reliance on last minute purchases have forced them to bid up the prices to obtain needed supply.[300]

118. Staff witness Ogur testified that the "effect of these two Orders (the November 1, 2000 and December 15, 2000 Orders) was to provide a strong signal to market participants that the Commission was acting vigorously to eliminate this spot market dysfunction."[301] Although all spot purchases

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[299] 93 FERC at 61,982-83.

[300] 93 FERC at 61,994.

[301] S-4 at 6:8-10; See also S-1 at 28:20-23.

would not be expected to move immediately to the forward market after December 15, market participants were (or should have been) aware that this critical dysfunction was going to be less and less of a factor affecting prices.[302]

119. Moreover, the Commission, in an April 26, 2001 Order adopted further market monitoring and mitigation measures for the California markets, and proposed to extend those measures to all Western spot markets. [303] The Commission included in its Western-wide proposal a must-offer rule for all non-hydroelectric generators and marketers and a condition on the market-based rate authority of all public utility sellers selling in the WECC to ensure that they do not engage in anti-competitive behavior.[304] In subsequent orders, the Commission adopted a Western-wide mitigation plan.

120. As a result of these Commission orders, Complainants were aware of the possibility of market mitigation and the risks they faced. Additionally, it must be found that it was not reasonable for Complainants to expect spot market prices to remain high indefinitely based on the fact that the Commission had given clear signals that it was going to act to remedy problems in the California and Western spot markets.

The Nevada Companies.

121. Record evidence shows that the Nevada Companies' procurement strategies, and the manner in which the strategies were implemented, were choices voluntarily made

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[302] Tr. 4447-8.

[303] 95 FERC 61,115.

[304] Id. at 61,365-66.

by these companies. To the extent they left themselves open to unnecessary risks, that was their choice also. As a result, as will be described below, substantial evidence in this case demonstrates that the contracts should not be modified or abrogated.

122. In March 2000, a Risk Management Committee ("RMC") was formed by the Nevada Companies. The RMC was set up to establish guidelines for procurement and risk management strategies. The evidence, in this case, shows that the Nevada Companies' contracts at issue in this case were entered into pursuant to an "Accelerated Procurement Strategy" ("APS") adopted in November 2000.[305] The APS was a "radical proposal." The record evidence in this case shows that there was a lack of rigorous analysis or quantitative studies supporting the APS.[306] The APS was adopted in an executive session, at the end of a regular RMC meeting. The APS was adopted without the benefit of any calculation concerning the Companies' exposure, should prices fall.[307] The Chairman of the RMC cited concerns about the creditworthiness of the Companies as the basis for the adoption of the APS. Under the APS, the Nevada Companies entered into short-term forward contracts much further in advance of the delivery period. This was totally different from their previous purchasing strategy, which had used a monthly RFP process to procure power.[308] Under the APS, they bought standardized, fixed-price products for the 2001 summer season and for 2002- 2005.

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[305] Ex. CES-2 at 18:12-13; Tr. at 2655:22-2656:2.

[306] Ex. CES-2 at 19:4-5, 19:17-20:1; Tr. at 2482:4-9; 2586:25-2587:6.

[307] Tr. at 2583-86; 2596-97.

[308] Exs. ECS-2 at 18; CES-8; NPC-12; Ex. CES-39; S-6 at 16-17; Tr. 2328; 2581-83; 2614-15.

123. The evidence indicates that APS was undertaken due to the Nevada Companies' perceived need to secure "reliability at any price,"[309] a desire to beat California before it "hit that market,"[310] and a desire to buy as much power as they could before their counterparties discovered their already "precarious financial position."[311] As the Companies' risk management consultant, Mr. Joyce, explained, the Companies sought to lock in power purchases early because: "there was a fear that very soon the market would get wind of the credit situation of the companies... And it was felt, and I probably recommended, that they acquire power before any kind of news hits the streets, because once it does hit the streets, the number of counterparties that would be willing to deal with them, since they couldn't post collateral, would dwindle to close to zero."[312]

124. The Nevada Companies contend that state regulatory policies drove the APS and witness Smart references a PUCN order.[313] This testimony is not supported by record evidence and is thus not credible. The order cited by Mr. Smart was issued after the Nevada Companies had conceived of and adopted the APS.[314] In an order dated November 22, 2000, the PUCN concluded that "NPC's purchase power acquisition strategy is inadequate since it does not consider

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[309] Ex. CES-2 at 15:8.

[310] Tr. at 2629:24-2630:1.

[311] Exs. CES-2 at 22:16-24:3; CES-14b at 154; Tr. at 2273:10-2274:16. The declining financial condition was due to the fact that they had incurred costs greater than they were allowed to recover in rates. Tr. at 2657.

[312] Ex. CES-14b at 154 (emphasis added).

[313] See Ex. CES-2 at 3:9-4:5, 10:13-11:9.

[314] Tr. at 2614:4-2615:19.

long-term [i.e., greater than three years] agreements."[315] Moreover, the minutes of the Risk Management Committee meetings at which the APS was considered and adopted, do not mention that the APS was being driven by a concern for state regulatory policies.[316]

125. The Nevada Companies did not pursue a mix of products. This is particularly troubling since their Comprehensive Energy Plan ("CEP"), submitted to the PUCN in January 2001, recomended a diverse portfolio.[317] The CEP specifically recommended a "[m]ixture" of short, intermediate and long-term resources; a "[b]lend of spot, indexed and fixed prices," and "[f]lexibility" to take advantage of future lower prices.[318]

126. The APS focused only on standardized products available in the broker markets. Even though the Nevada Companies had authority to enter into forward contracts of up to three years duration without additional regulatory approval, virtually all of their contracts at issue in this proceeding are for terms of one year or less.[319] Many of the contracts are for terms of only 90 days.[320] All of the contracts are fixed-price contracts.[321] The evidence also shows that there were long-term, structured transactions offered, but not accepted by the Nevada Companies.[322] The

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[315] Ex. NPC-7 at 9, P 73.

[316] See Ex. CES-7; Ex. CES-8.

[317] Ex. CES-2 at 20:18-21:7.

[318] Ex. CES-9 at 17.

[319] Ex. NPC-12; Tr. at 2337:14-18.

[320] Ex. NPC-12.

[321] Ex. NPC-12; Tr. at 2336:23-2337:1.

[322] Ex. CES-35. The Calpine offer was a five-year deal for a 6x16, must-take sale at $67/MWh.

record supports the finding that since the forward curve at the time reflects backwardation, lower average prices could have been obtained by entering into longer-term contracts.[323] The evidence demonstrates that the Nevada Companies undertook a strategy of purchasing solely short-term, fixed-price products well in advance of when they were actually needed, even though they knew that it would be prudent to have a mix of short-term, mid-term and long-term contracts.[324]

127. Moreover, the evidence supports a finding that the Nevada Companies overestimated their ability to resell their excess power.[325] The record evidence shows that the Nevada Companies sold excess power in 2000 and realized a margin of $100 million.[326] NPC's revenues from resale increased eight-fold from 1999 to 2000, and 6.7 times from 2000 to 2001.[327] SPPC's revenues from resale increased five-fold from 1999 to 2000, and more than doubled from 2000 to 2001.[328] The Nevada Companies sold power in 2000 and 2001 in the ISO and PX organized spot markets, as well as to DWR.[329] The Nevada Companies realized prices in the $400 to $750/MWh range for their excess power sales to those California entities.[330] At one point, the Companies' portfolio

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[323] Tr. at 2338:20-24; Ex. RES-10 at 5:17-18, 5:21-22.

[324] Exs. CES-36 at 54-55; NPC-12; CES-34.

[325] CES-4 at P 291.

[326] Ex. CES-2 at 26:18-28:3. Professor Kalt graphically depicted the amount of excess power purchased by the Nevada Companies for September 2002 and compared those purchases to previous years. Ex. EPME-38b.

[327] Ex. S-10 at 3 and 5.

[328] Ex. S-12 at 3 and 5.

[329] Ex. MSC-137; Tr. at 2267:1-5, 2335:25-2336:10.

[330] Ex. MSC-137.

was "in the money" by $1.8 billion.[331] This course of action was risky and the Companies' own CFO, Mark Ruelle acknowledged this,[332] yet the Companies failed to purchase any of the other risk-hedging products offered in the market.[333] The Companies did not hedge the risk of a drop in market prices. The evidence supports a finding that it would be a reasonable inference that the Nevada Companies expected to return a profit again in 2001.[334] This is supported by the following: on a Nevada Companies' investors' conference call on May 11, 2001, then-CFO Mark Ruelle stated: "[W]e have great opportunities in liquidating our long position.... But if for example there will be regional price caps put [in, they] would limit our ability to liquidate our long position at favorable prices."[335] This shows that their purchases were not just to serve their load. As Staff witness Tingle-Stewart testified, "by choosing to contract for

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[331] Tr. at 2681:3-7.

[332] Ex. CES-10.

[333] Exs. RES-1 at 7:5-18; RES-10 at 4:13-6:3; Tr. at 3440:5-3444:18.

[334] This is consistent with the PUCN's findings regarding purchases in 2000 for the summer of 2001. The PUCN found in the deferred energy orders that the Nevada Companies had purchased more than they needed, which was indicative of some speculation in the power markets, had focused on reliability at any price without conducting a thorough analysis of the options available, had failed to undertake appropriate quantitative and qualitative analyses in changing their procurement practices in 2000 and 2001, and had failed to develop a balanced portfolio. Ex. CES-2 at 7:12-8:19 (these PUCN Orders were in 2002). While these power purchases were for the summer 2001 delivery (unlike the contracts at issue in this case, which are for delivery in 2002 and beyond), they were undertaken "pursuant to the same directives from the RMC and management" as the contracts at issue in this case. Ex. CES-2 at 9:12-14. The PUCN argued that the reasonableness of their purchases should not be considered in this case. However, suffice to say, the hearing designation order mandated such consideration.

[335] Ex. CES-10.

significantly more power than they needed to reliably serve their loads, [the Nevada Companies] exacerbated the situation in which they now find themselves. It does not appear to have been necessary for them to purchase these amounts of excess energy. However, inasmuch as [the Nevada Companies] freely chose to do so, that certainly mitigates against relieving them of their contracts."[336] This testimony is given substantial weight.

128. Furthermore, the record shows that the Companies did not adjust their purchasing strategy even after deferred energy accounting was reinstituted as a result of AB 369, effective on April 18, 2001.[337] Deferred energy accounting allowed the Companies to take a more orderly approach to acquiring their needed power supplies. Nevertheless, the Nevada Companies continued to purchase fixed priced contracts during April, May, and June 2001.

129. The Nevada Companies purchased more power than necessary to cover their load requirements, effectively hedging against increases in the price of power. However, they ignored the prospect that power prices could decrease - even though forward curves from the time of contract execution showed that the market reflected backwardation.[338] This concerted effort was undertaken even though the Risk Management Committee was aware of the risk management tools available to assess the Companies' exposure to price decreases. However, they did not utilize them.[339]

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[336] Ex. S-6 at 28:15-29:2.

[337] Ex. CES-2 at 6:14-15.

[338] Ex. CES-2 at 14:1-14. Prices in the short term were higher than prices in the long term.

[339] Ex. CES-2 at 15:13-16:14.

130. The record shows that the Nevada Companies relied on prices reflected in broker sheets,[340] checking price quotes and reading a few trade publications to guide their expectations about the future of energy prices.[341] Moreover, these Companies did not analyze the impact of new generation on forward prices, or the supply situation for 2002 and 2003.[342] Instead, they relied on public reports to assess the supply and market prices as an indicator of expected supply.[343] The Nevada Companies' head trader was aware that there was new generation capacity scheduled to come on-line in California, Arizona and Nevada in 2001 and 2002.[344] However, the evidence developed in this case shows that, at the time they were entering into the contracts, the Nevada Companies did not do any quantitative analysis concerning how the entry of new generation capacity would impact supplies or prices in 2002 and 2003.[345] The Nevada Companies' risk manager also did not do any analysis or review any reports on new generation when the companies were determining their APS strategy.[346] This evidence belies any claims that the purchasing strategy was for reliability purposes.[347]

131. The Commission directed the parties to present evidence on "what other alternatives were available to buyers

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[340] Tr. at 3108:10-18.

[341] Tr. at 3113;15-3114:3; 2597:15-22; 2488:8-10.

[342] Tr. at 2597:15-22; 2669:8-10.

[343] Tr. at 2669:5-7; 2597:15-25.

[344] Tr. at 2264:6-13 (Perry).

[345] Tr. at 2264:14-18; 2669:8-11.

[346] Tr. at 2668:23-2669:11.

[347] For instance, the Nevada Companies' cite a NERC report to support shortages in 2002, but this report applied only to 2001. Tr. at 2667-69.

and sellers."[348] The Nevada Companies claim there were no feasible alternatives. The record evidence shows that there were alternatives available to the Nevada Companies during the period at issue. Accordingly, it is found that the Nevada Companies' contentions in this regard are meritless. First, the Nevada Companies knew what types of products were available to them. They traded through five brokers and purchased forward power from more than thirty companies.[349] They had access to "RFP's, bulletin boards, trade press, broker sheets, multiple broker quotes and direct supplier solicitation."[350] The Risk Management Committee was aware of physically-and financially-settled risk management tools, such as indexed products, shaped products, unit contingent products, derivatives, swaps, collars, caps, floors, put and call options, and blended contracts.[351] In fact, the Companies entered into at least one type of option.[352] The Companies simply concluded that they could not purchase options because "they would have a hard time coming up with the cash" to pay the option premiums.[353] However, they could have chosen options that could have avoided at least some of the higher priced contracts they are now locked into."[354]

132. The record establishes that the Nevada Companies

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[348] 99 FERC at 61,191.

[349] Exs EPME-16; CES-2 at 13:12-13; Tr. at 2253:2-12; Exs. RES-10 at 3:17- 18, 3:22-4:2; CES-14b at 121; EPME-16; CES-2 at 13:12-13; Tr. at 2253:2-12; Exs. RES-10 at 3:17-18, 3:22-4:2; CES-14b at 121.

[350] Ex. CES-2 at 13:13-15.

[351] Exs. CES-2 at 14:4-6; RES-1 at 7:10-18; RES-10 at 3:11-18, 4:13-6:3; Tr. at 3440:5-3444:18.

[352] Tr. at 2611:21-2612:7.

[353] Tr. at 2342:8-14.

[354] Ex. S-6 at 19:7-10.

had long-term deals presented to them, but they declined to enter into those deals.[355] These companies undertook this course even though their own recommended course of action was to enter into long-term deals.[356] For example, ten different entities offered the Nevada Power Companies long-term contracts for peak power for delivery starting in 2002.[357] The Nevada Companies considered but rejected a five year contract for $67/MWh and a fifteen year deal at $47/MWh.[358]

133. Another option would have been transmission procurement strategies conducive to obtaining transmission resources which could have aided in the procurement of alternative sources of power. The Nevada Companies failed to do this. For instance these companies failed to develop the resources needed to compete effectively for and use transmission capacity.[359] The Companies lacked the technology to compete effectively for transmission capacity when it became available.[360] Furthermore, on at least one

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[355] Ex.CES-35; Tr. 2572-76.

[356] See Exs. CES-9 at 17; CES-35.

[357] The evidence establishes that the Nevada Power Companies considered two Calpine proposals: one a 200-MW, five-year, 6x16 must-take proposal with a composite price of $67.00/MWh; and a second proposal combining a 150-MW, fifteen-year, 7x24 must-take proposal with a 150-MW day-ahead call option with a composite price of $42.14/MWh. Ex. CES-35. NPC also concurrently considered a ten-year proposal from Duke, which apparently was a 100-MW, 6x16 must-take proposal with a composite cost of $102.00. Exs. CES-34; CES-35; Tr. at 2573:10; 2576:13-15. At least two such deals were offered by merchant power plant developers, which mean that the long-term sales would have been backed by generation. The Nevada Companies did not pursue these options.

[358] Ex. CES-35; Tr. 2572-76.

[359] Ex. CES-2 at 16:15-17:2.

[360] Tr. at 2609:12-2610:6.

occasion when the Companies acquired transmission capacity, they sold the capacity before it could be used.[361]

134. Contrary to the assertions of the Nevada Companies, the markets in the West, including Mead, were liquid trading points. Unrebutted evidence in this case establishes that the Western markets were liquid. According to Reliant's witness, Flowers, the forward markets in the West were "liquid" during the period at issue in this case.[362] Flowers testified that "more than twenty-five entities were actively trading at the Palo Verde and Mead hubs."[363]

135. The Hearing Order directed the parties to present evidence on "the process and procedures the complainants used to evaluate the contracts" at issue.[364] The evidence in this case demonstrates that each of the transactions with the Nevada Companies was a "brokered" transaction, i.e., it was entered into by the parties using an independent, third-party broker without knowledge of the counterparty's identity.[365]

136. The evidence supports a finding that the Respondents were price takers.[366] They did not set the price, but instead were subject to the prevailing market prices. Indeed, the Nevada Companies admit that the contract prices were at or

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[361] Ex. CES-34.

[362] Tr. at 3442:13-3443:6.

[363] Exs. RES-10 at 3:17-18; see also MAEM-78. Mr. Perry stated that Mead was a liquid point to deliver power into California. Tr. at 2796:8-2797:8; Ex. EPME-40.

[364] 99 FERC at 61,191.

[365] Ex. NPC-10 at 3: 1-11; Tr. at 2252:12-17; Exs. CES-1 at 3:15-27; AEP-1 at 3:21-4:16; EPME-22 at 18:6-14; MSC-21 at 8:19-9:8; RES-1 at 4:14-17.

[366] See Exs. S-1 at 28:14-16; CES-1 at 4:2-15; EPME-22 at 19:7-8.

below prevailing market prices.[367]

137. The evidence shows that the Nevada Companies were not forced to enter into any of the contracts. Tapes of the conversations between Jonathan Perry, the Nevada Companies' principal trader for forward power, and the independent brokers for several of the transactions that are the subject of the Nevada Companies' complaints substantiate the terms of the contracts. In addition, these tape conversations show the context and tone of the negotiations. Thus, the record evidence demonstrates: that the transactions often occur in a matter of seconds, there is no direct communication between the counterparties, and Mr. Perry is relaxed and congenial. The evidence does not show any pressure, uncertainty, hesitancy, or a lack of understanding about what Mr. Perry was purchasing. Instead, the transactions are routine and unremarkable broker trades.[368]

Snohomish:

138. The evidence in this case proves that Snohomish profited from reselling power that it had purchased in the wholesale market during 2000 and early 2001.[369] Snohomish benefited in another way: by entering into the contract with Morgan Stanley (it hedged against fluctuations in the spot market) it protected its ratepayers from additional rate increases.[370] The record also shows that Snohomish's decision to enter into the MSCG contract was reasonable

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[367] See Nevada Power Companies/Calpine Complaint at 19; Nevada Power Companies/MSCG Complaint at 19; Nevada Power Companies/Reliant Complaint at 18.

[368] Ex. MSC-136.

[369] Ex. MSC-132 at 31.

[370] Tr. at 1776: 5-15 (Bulova); see also Ex. SNO-4 at 7:15-18; Ex. MSC 81-3.

given the circumstances at the time. Finally, the record also shows that Snohomish had other "alternatives" available to it.[371]

139. The evidence presented in this case establishes the chronological sequence of events to the transaction between Morgan Stanley and Snohomish. Several months before negotiating the contract, Snohomish recognized the need to secure additional wholesale power. In October of 2000, the Snohomish's Board authorized Snohomish to enter into contracts to purchase up to 107 MW of power for periods as long as ten years.[372]

140. On December 13, 2000, Snohomish's Board resolved to raise retail rates an average of thirty-five percent. This allowed Snohomish to purchase up to 100 MW of power at a melded cost of up to $125/MWh.[373] The rate increase took effect on January 1, 2001.[374] Snohomish issued on December 22, 2000, a Request for Proposal ("RFP") containing three bid "[o]ptions." The RFP's "[o]ptions" reflected just some of the products from which Snohomish could choose.[375] Option A was for the purchase of 50 to 100 MW for one, two, or three years (without a price). Option C had benchmark prices of $50, $75, $100, $150 and $200; bidders were to specify the length of contract term necessary to obtain those

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[371] See id.

[372] Exs. MSC-113; MSC-114; Tr. at 1606:11-1609:23.

[373] Snohomish's 35 percent rate increase occurred prior to Snohomish's negotiating its contract with MSCG, and prior to issuing an RFP for the purchase of power. Exs. MSC-116 at 9-10; SNO-1 at 4:19-5:2. Thus, the $125 is a place holder to cover the costs of the subsequent RFP. Any price paid for power in excess of $125 would not have fit within the new rate structure. Tr. at 1720-23; 1724.

[374] Ex. SNO-1 at 4; Tr. at 1625, 1719.

[375] Ex. SNO-5.

prices.[376] Snohomish issued this RFP to a total of seventeen entities based on their credit ratings, performance, payment history and a general trading relationship with Snohomish.[377] Five entities responded to the RFP.[378] The RFP specified that Snohomish was not required to select any of the bids submitted in response to the RFP. Snohomish reserved the right to reject any and all bids, and to terminate negotiations at any time. Snohomish could terminate the RFP if the price of power offered by counterparties was too high, a collateral annex term proposed was "onerous or unfair" or the proposed term was too long.[379] Snohomish amended the RFP to permit refreshing of bids.[380]

141. Snohomish received Morgan Stanleys' bid under Option "A" of the RFP for power for periods of one, two or three years with gradually decreasing prices respectively.[381] Snohomish rejected this bid and requested Morgan Stanley to bid under Option "C" for an unspecified term, at a rate of $100/MWh. [382] Snohomish specifically requested Morgan

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[376] Ex. MSC-8 at 3-4; Tr. 1735, 1737.

[377] Ex. SNO-4 at 5:6-8; Tr. at 1796:1-15.

[378] Id. Snohomish cites *Teco Power Service Corp*, 53 FERC 61,202 at 61,810 (1990) to support its allegations of market power. However, this case is inapposite. In the cited case, the Commission stated that it did not intend to apply a rigid numerical sparseness test, nor did it consider that a rigid numerical test is appropriate in determining whether a bidding program is sufficiently subscribed to allay concerns about market dominance in generation.

[379] Exs. SNO-5; Tr. at 1730:15-22; Tr. at 1730:23-1731:1; Tr. at 1731:21-1732:23.

[380] Ex. SNO 10 at 2 P 6; Tr. at 1747:22-23. The amendment allowed bids of 25 MWs. Id. at 1. MSCG and other offerors refreshed their prices due to changing market conditions. Ex. MSC-80.

[381] Exs. MSC-10; MSC-8 at 10; Tr. 1745.

[382] Tr. at 1743:20-1744:5; 1752-53; 3984-85; Ex. MSC-8 at 10.

Stanley to bid "for however many months" to permit Snohomish to purchase power for approximately $100/MWh. Morgan Stanley complied with Snohomish's request, and submitted a bid for 50 MW for an approximately ten-year term, at a price of $100/MWh.[383] In response to a bid from a competitor, Snohomish next requested Morgan Stanley to shorten its offer term by one year, and to extend the delivery commencement date.[384] Snohomish informed Morgan Stanley that a price "slightly over" $100/MWh, might be acceptable for the year shorter term.[385] Morgan Stanley complied with Snohomish's request, and submitted an approximately nine-year bid at a price of $105/MWh for 25 MW.

142. Snohomish and Morgan Stanley then engaged in the process of negotiating the terms of the contract. Throughout the negotiations, Snohomish's goal was to keep the price of the contract to under the $125 "placeholder" established by the Snohomish Board in December 2000, long before the RFP was announced. Shorter terms at market rates were available to Snohomish, but rejected. Morgan Stanley offered to enter into an alternative arrangement of two separate deals, one for five years (at above market prices) and another for five-seven years (at below market prices).[386] This too was rejected. The record conclusively shows that it was Snohomish's choice to pass the risk of price volatility to the seller and pay a below market rate of $105 for the first

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[383] Tr. at 1749:10-13. Morgan Stanley informed Snohomish that the proposed $100/MWh, ten-year deal was probably "more length" and "more volume" than Morgan Stanley wanted to sell. Ex. MSC-11, Vol II at 51:19-21.

[384] Tr. at 1752:6-11; 1751:18-25.

[385] Exs. MSC-11, Vol. III at 18:19-22; MSC-16, KH 1/25/01 08:07.

[386] Tr. 3992-93.

five years, even if the contract had to be for a longer term.[387] Moreover, Snohomish had the choice of a shorter contract at higher prices, but rejected that choice.[388] Witness Herrling for Snohomish testified that, in January 2001 (when the contract was being negotiated) Snohomish expected spot prices to remain high for no more than a year or two.[389] This was corroborated by witness Adam who testified that it was reasonable to conclude that spot prices would decline to $25/MWh by 2003, once supply and demand fundamentals were corrected.[390] The inference to be made from this testimony is that the primary goal was to get a below market rate at any cost. Thus, the evidence shows that Snohomish voluntarily chose the term of its contract.

143. The negotiations (which included amendments to the WSPP Agreement, the form of confirmation and a collateral annex to manage the parties' credit risks)[391] took place by telephone calls and electronic mail. Snohomish was represented by counsel during the negotiations of the contract.[392] Snohomish dictated the deadlines to complete negotiations and several of the contract terms.[393] Snohomish submitted to MSCG a proposed margining agreement when it learned that Morgan Stanley was concerned about Snohomish's credit.[394] Morgan Stanley witness Hamdan testified that Morgan Stanley valued its business relationship

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[387] Tr. at 1586-87, 1592; 1758; 3993-94.

[388] Tr. at 1776.

[389] Tr. at 1866.

[390] Tr. at 2120-21.

[391] Ex. MSC-8 at 8:1-7.

[392] Ex. MSC-55 at 7:21-23.

[393] Tr. at 1762:15-17; 1762:18-22.

[394] Exs. MSC-19; MSC-8 at 15:1; MSC-177 at 26.

with Snohomish, and thus felt it was under significant pressure to enter into the deal with Snohomish by Snohomish's deadline of midnight on January 26, 2001.[395] This testimony is credible. The evidence demonstrates that, shortly after Snohomish entered into the contract, it touted to its customers that the Morgan Stanley and other long-term contracts "give us a lot of security against the uncertainty of market fluctuations," and that the contracts insulate the ratepayers from market volatility.[396] Snohomish expected, based on its forward curve (April 2001), that its contract with Morgan Stanley would provide Snohomish with power at a price far below market for at least two years.[397]

144. The evidence establishes that Snohomish had several other available alternatives as well, including: (1) continuing to purchase power in the spot market; (2) executing a forward contract for a term shorter than the term of the Morgan Stanley contract; (3) contracting for a share of a new generation plant or building its own generation; (4) purchasing a put option contract,[398] and/or (5) entering into two separate agreements with a total term of nine years with one or two counterparties.[399]

SCWC:

145. The record in this case establishes that in 1996,

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[395] Tr. at 3938:3-3938:6, 3942:12-16, 3945:15-24.

[396] Ex. MSC-83 at 6; Ex. MSC-78 at 7:10-12.

[397] Ex. MSC-37 at 22:22-23:3, Ex. MSC-50. If Snohomish had purchased a short-term contract for 25 MW for the remainder of 2001, it would have needed to raise its rates an additional 11 percent to cover this exposure. Tr. at 1776:5-15; Ex. SNO-4 at 7:15-18.

[398] Ex. MSC-98 at 38:2-39:8.

[399] MSC-11, Vol. III at 22:19-24:17; Ex. MSC-16, KH 1/25/01.

SCWC ended its status as a full requirements customer and began purchasing energy from the deregulated market. In early 1999, SCWC retained a consulting firm, Complete Energy Services ("CEServices"), for advice on power purchasing and market monitoring.[400] In consultation with CEServices, SCWC began to purchase minimum load capacity needs through block forward contracts of one year duration, while purchasing from the PX spot market to meet peak load.[401] SCWC testified that this strategy was successful, permitting it to avoid market volatility and achieve savings - approximately $13.26 million from 1999 through April 2001 - as compared to the costs SCWC would have incurred had it purchased exclusively from the centralized spot markets.[402]

146. SCWC was an active participant in the competitive power markets. SCWC transacted as a buyer and seller, in both the spot and forward wholesale markets.[403] SCWC actively monitored electricity markets through CEServices, and had full access to forward price information through daily monitoring of sources such as Platt's, Enerfax, NYMEX, the Intercontinental Exchange, and EnronOnline and, if needed, by calling suppliers for price quotes.[404] Mirant relied on similar sources.[405]

147. The evidence establishes that in the spring of 2000, the baseload contract with Illinova finished and SCWC had to replace it. SCWC considered, but rejected, entering into a

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[400] Ex. SCW-1 at 8:11-17.

[401] Ex. SCW-1 at 11:1-12:10.

[402] Ex. SCW-1 at 11:3-14.

[403] Tr. at 2878:23 to 2879:16; Ex. SCW-1 at 16:5-7.

[404] Tr. at 2875:8-16 (Dickson); Ex. MAEM-68 at 82-83.

[405] Ex. MAEM-2 at 7:14-18.

block forward contract for a term greater than one year. SCWC was aware that spot market prices had risen substantially above historical levels, and well above the $35.50/MWh one-year contract with Dynegy that it had executed for service beginning May 1, 2000.[406]

148. Notwithstanding the high prices that SCWC was observing and the increased market volatility, SCWC made a decision to wait until early March 2001 to issue an RFP to replace the one-year contract it knew would expire on May 1, 2001.[407] SCWC testified that it had to issue an RFP at the "peak" of the energy crisis - seemingly through no fault of its own.[408] The evidence does not support this contention. It is apparent that SCWC made its own choices based on the information available to it at the time and thus made informed decisions. SCWC followed a consistent procurement strategy that relied upon one-year contracts from third-party suppliers.[409] SCWC's existing one-year baseload contract was due to expire in May 2001 and by March 2001, SCWC had made little progress in securing a replacement source of firm energy. SCWC has not proffered any evidence of why it waited until March 2001-to cover a position it knew was impending. There is a lack of evidence of any reasons that prevented SCWC from seriously pursuing other options well before March 2001. Thus, the record supports the finding that SCWC simply chose to wait until that time before it was willing to issue an RFP and negotiate a new contract.

149. On March 7, 2001, SCWC issued an RFP, prepared

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[406] Tr. at 2884:6-24.

[407] Ex. MAEM-68 at 99:10-20; Tr. at 2889:10 to 2891:11.

[408] Ex. SCW-1 at 12:5-10.

[409] Ex. SCW-1 at 24:14-16.

largely by its consultant David Kolk at CEServices, to initiate a competitive bidding process.[410] Prior to issuing the RFP, Dr. Kolk and an SCWC manager contacted suppliers and narrowed down the list of RFP recipients to six, including Mirant.[411] The RFP restricted bidders to terms ranging from one to seven years,[412] indicated a preference for fixed price offers,[413] and a price in the range of $90.[414] Three different responses were received with varying options, permitting SCWC to choose the most favorable offer.[415] SCWC made no subsequent effort to seek out other offers, consult a broker, or reissue the RFP to get other proposals.[416]

150. The evidence reflects that Mirant knew it had to compete for the sale.[417] Mirant offered a price quote of $89/MWh for a five-year contract, starting April 1, 2001, (SCWC's RFP had asked for a contract to begin "as soon as

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[410] Tr. at 2893:4-18.

[411] Tr. at 2893:19-2894:20; Ex. SCW-1 at 17:1-8.

[412] Tr. at 2900-02.

[413] Tr. at 2903.

[414] Exs. MAEM-2 at 13; MAEM-9; Tr. 2904-5. Tr. at 2901:1-4; 2903:3-7; Exs. SCW-4 at 12; SCWC-1 at 12:5-10; 24:10-12.

[415] Tr. at 2894:21-24; 2944:10-17. SCWC's fifty percent response rate to its RFP in 2001 was actually a better response rate than SCWC received when it issued a similar RFP for a baseload contract in early 2000 - before the California energy crisis began. At that time, SCWC received just two responses. Tr. at 2897:19-2899:9.

[416] Tr. at 2897:8-18.

[417] Exs. MAEM-2 at 19; MAEM-2 at 10:6-9. Mirant transacted with twenty-seven different entities at SP15 in the month of March 2001. Ex. MAEM-39. SCWC states that it was aware there were more than fifteen or sixteen different entities supplying wholesale power at SP15 - a sufficient number "to ensure that we were getting a competitive bid." Tr. at 2894:9-14 (Dickson).

possible").[418] Mirant's indicated price quote was based on its forward price curve. Mirant subsequently refreshed its offer(s) based on its forward prices curves, over the following two days of negotiations.[419] Mirant's practice is to price forward sales from its own forward price curves, as explained by witness Schaefer.[420] The forward curves reflected Mirant's best estimate of expected future spot prices,[421] and are driven by expectations of future market fundamentals.[422]

151. According to unrebutted evidence submitted in this case, Mirant relied on forward curves specifically developed to price power for delivery at SP15.[423] At the time, Mirant and SCWC were discussing the contract, forward prices were increasing. As a result, when Mirant repriced its offer on March 16, 2002 in response to SCWC's $92/MWh counter-offer, the refreshed price was $95/MWh.[424] Mirant's initial and subsequent price offers remained close to the price range of $90/MWh or less that SCWC's consultant testified he was expecting to receive in response to the RFP.[425]

152. SCWC's lead executive in charge of executing the contract, Mr. Joel Dickson, was a seasoned negotiator.[426]

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[418] Ex. MAEM-2 at 13:1-12 & 14:5-7.

[419] Ex. MAEM-2 at 14:5-7.

[420] Ex. MAEM-2 at 7:12-26.

[421] Ex. MAEM-38 at 7:7-9.

[422] Ex. MAEM-2 at 8:8-16.

[423] Offers at any other trading hubs in California or Palo Verde would have involved the risk of transmission congestion costs. Tr. at 2900:13-17; Ex. MAEM-68 at 65:4-21.

[424] MAEM-2 at 14:13-15 & 15:8-16.

[425] Exs. MAEM-68 at 111:10-13; MAEM-2 at 13:16-18; MAEM-9.

[426] Tr. at 2876:22-2877:5.

There is a lack of evidence that anyone from SCWC, including Mr. Dickson, attempted to negotiate non-price terms during the parties' discussions from March 14 to March 16, 2001, including any specific modifications to the WSPPA, to permit SCWC to seek unilateral modifications to the contract.[427]

153. The $95/MWh price was substantially below the then-prevailing expected future spot market prices for the remainder of 2001 through the summer of 2002.[428] The evidence in this case shows that SCWC expected prices to drop in the fall of 2001.[429] Notwithstanding this fact, it chose to enter into this contract. As a result, Mirant took on the market risk, when it agreed to sell to SCWC at $95/MWh. The savings to SCWC were front-end loaded and provided stability and price protection from volatility for SCWC. Conversely, Mirant agreed to take an up-front loss in the early years of the contract, with the expectation that the losses would be made up in later years.[430]

154. Mirant's business practice is to hedge forward delivery obligations with transactions at the same delivery point.[431] The record reflects that Mirant entered into various transactions at SP15 over the next month, which could be used to hedge its sale to SCWC.[432] In some of the indicated hedge transactions, Mirant ended up paying approximately $232/MWh in 2001, substantially more than the $95 in its

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[427] Ex. MAEM-2 at 20:23-21:4.

[428] Exs. MAEM-2 at 13:24-28 & 20:8-9; SCWC-4 at 4.

[429] Tr. at 2927:11-2928:1.

[430] Ex. MAEM-2 at 20:12-18.

[431] Tr. at 3349:6-16.

[432] Exs. MAEM-2 at 9:5-10:2; MAEM-7.

contract with SCWC.[433] Mirant expected it would recoup initial losses during the "out years," where Mirant's hedge transactions are less than $95/MWh.[434] Mirant witness, Dr. Stephen Henderson, performed a net present value analysis of these various near-term and far-term hedge transactions, and concluded that Mirant stands to earn a profit margin (if any) only if the SCWC contract price is honored throughout the entire term of the contract.[435]

155. Additionally, Dr. Henderson testified that any margin Mirant may earn would not be excessive, "especially in light of the high price volatility that characterized the forward markets during this period."[436] SCWC's consultant agreed that Mirant would likely hedge its SCWC contract immediately.[437] Accordingly, the record in this case substantiates the finding that modification of the price of the

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[433] Ex. MAEM-2 at 25:1-5.

[434] Ex. MAEM-2 at 9:8-10:2; 24:22-25:9. SCWC questions Mirant's inclusion of certain indicative hedge transactions with Enron. The hedge transactions with Enron were terminated before they had gone to delivery. These hedge transactions represent costs incurred and risk for Mirant associated to the SCWC Contract. According to Mirant, when it entered into its hedges it essentially locked in its margin (if any) on the SCWC contract. Mirant's position with respect to the SCWC transaction did not change due to the early termination of four of the hedge transactions. Mirant's arguments are persuasive, e.g., Mirant's liquidated damages expenses (the mark-to-market exposure on the contract for terminating the contracts early) in this case, are approximately $19 million associated with the terminated Enron contracts. Tr. at 3342:8-20.

[435] Dr. Henderson stated "it seems clear that [Mirant] lost a substantial amount of money under the SCWC contract during the period from April 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001." Exs. MAEM-16 at 32:14-16; MAEM-16 at 28:5-15; 33:13-34:3.

[436] Ex. MAEM-16 at 33:6-8.

[437] MAEM-68 at 128:5-13. Staff also recognized Mirant's risks. Ex. S-1 at 28.

SCWC contract would provide a windfall to SCWC, since, in effect, SCWC will have bought power from Mirant during 2001 at a significant discount to market prices," and Mirant will loose its ability to earn a return on its risk in later years.[438]

156. SCWC's witness Dickson's testimony is contradictory and thus, not credible. For instance, in his rebuttal testimony, Mr. Dickson's claims that SCWC thought in mid-March 2001, that "FERC would do very little" to remedy spot market dysfunctions.[439] However, Mr. Dickson admitted that " FERC was being pressured from many quarters to provide relief for California consumers," [440] and he asserted that Mirant should have anticipated the possibility of Commission action to modify its contract. [441] SCWC's consultant, Dr. Kolk, testified more candidly. He admitted that future prices were simply difficult to predict with certainty.[442] Moreover, Mirant's witness testified that Mirant was aware that "FERC was under pressure" to adopt more severe price limitations, but ultimately "it was impossible for

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[438] Ex. MAEM-16 at 34:15-19.

[439] Ex. SCW-11 at 9:2-4.

[440] Ex. SCW-11 at 13:10-13.

[441] Mr. Dickson also testified, that based on his discussions with CEServices, he thought the dysfunctions would last until the summer of 2003, when he expected sufficient new generation would come on line. (Ex. SCW-1 at 22:11-14). However, this is not credible since it is not supported by his actions of agreeing to a contract with duration through 2006. SCWC could have accepted a shorter contract of sufficient duration to hedge against volatility through the summer of 2003 (Tr. at 2944:10-17) but did not. SCWC's consultant at CEServices confirmed that analysis of the spot market dysfunctions was not a driving factor in SCWC's procurement strategy and, indeed, that his own analysis of those dysfunctions was "irrelevant" to what SCWC was looking at. Ex. MAEM-68 at 147:3-11.

[442] Ex. MAEM-68 at 86:2-4.

Mirant to predict with any degree of certainty what mitigation measures would be in place for [California and nearby] spot markets."[443] Both parties testified that they did not expect the high prices to last indefinitely.[444]

157. SCWC also had available to it and actively explored a variety of resource options. The record shows, for instance, in October 2000 (after a summer of high prices) Dynegy offered to extend its contract with SCWC, based on a "blend and extend" rate of between $46.50/MWh to $54.50/MWh, depending on the term of the extension.[445] Moreover, SCWC and Enron discussed in November 2000, a contract for differences by which SCWC could hedge costs at $55.73/MWh.[446] Also, SCWC could have chosen to rely on the spot market. Additionally, SCWC could have entered into a shorter term block forward contract for the Summer of 2001. SCWC had a variety of responses to its RFP, from which it could have chosen a proposal other than Mirant's, including contracts for less than five years. The record also shows that, beginning in 1999, CEServices prepared and

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[443] Ex. MAEM-2 at 12:3 & 12:10-12.

[444] Tr. at 2925:23 to 2928:1; Ex. MAEM-2 at 11:4-6. SCWC asserts that any reasonable seller should have expected SCWC to file a complaint if FERC did not take "broader based" action for price relief in Docket No. EL00-95-000. Ex. SCW-11 at 13:8-10. SCWC based this statement on the existence of the $74/MWh advisory benchmark price as of mid-December 2000. SCWC's arguments are meritless. There is no record evidence to support its allegations. The RFP never specified a target price of $74/MWh and there is no record evidence that any representative from SCWC told Mirant that it sought a price of $74/MWh. Moreover, SCWC's assertion could call into question its intentions at the time it signed this contract.

[445] Exs. MAEM-16 at 21:6-22:2; MAEM-24; MAEM-25.

[446] Exs. MAEM-16 at 20:11-21:3; MAEM-22; MAEM-23; Tr. at 2888:10-19 (Dickson).

continually updated a Strategic Energy Plan (SEP)[447] making recommendations on numerous supply options available to SCWC.[448] SCWC's SEP specifically discusses using a "call" arrangement (SCWC would pay a monthly capacity charge for the right to purchase energy at a price tied to natural gas costs, rather than committing to a long-term purchase).[449]

158. Staff witness Tingle-Stewart testified that the structure of SCWC's RFP limited the options available to it - "by ruling out, up front, contracts of less than one year, variable price contracts, and contracts with prices higher than the $90 range, SCWC made a conscious decision to take the risk that its price projections would hold true."[450] The record supports a finding that if there were "limitations" on resource options available to SCWC, then these were the result of SCWC's calculated decisions.

159. Like Snohomish, SCWC in order to obtain a certain price upfront, imposed conditions on the bidders which locked in a contract of several years. In fact the record shows that SCWC believed it would have to agree to a contract of at least five years to be able to get the price it wanted.[451] The record evidence establishes that SCWC agreed to the contract in spite of the fact that it did not expect high prices to persist for long due to a number of things: California streamlining authorizations for new generation; demand shifts from spot to forward markets; the effect of FERC

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[447] Exs. MAEM-17; MAEM-18 at 6:6-20.

[448] Ex. MAEM-17 at 14-15. Alternatives included contracts for options, swaps and contracts for differences. Exs. MAEM-16 at 10-11; S-14.

[449] Ex S-14.

[450] Ex. S-6 at 36:13-16.

[451] Tr. at 2927.

decisions.[452] Thus, SCWC chose to avoid price volatility by shifting the risks on to Mirant. Under these circumstances, contract modification is not warranted.

160. The evidence in this case also demonstrates that contract modification would destroy investor confidence and threaten the viability of bilateral forward markets. An investment banker with thirty years experience (including credit risk management) testified that performance of the competitive wholesale market "has mirrored the performance of companies in other deregulated industries," with price volatility, among others, causing deterioration of the "overall credit quality of the industry participants."[453] If an industry has "weakened capital structures and volatile industry dynamics, predictability of cash flow becomes important in assessing risk... [and use] of financial hedging instruments and fixed-rate forward contract[s] are important tools in building predictability of cash flow."[454] Energy merchants rely on forward contracts, in an industry with volatile markets, to provide "stable and predictable cash flows" that "bolster their substantial credit requirements and support ongoing trading and marketing operations." [455] This testimony is entitled to substantial weight. The testimony was not contradicted by any other testimony in this case and the testimony is from a financial expert with years of experience in investments.[456]

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[452] Tr. at 2924-26; 2965; 2926;.

[453] Ex. EPME-20 at 6:14-17.

[454] Id.

[455] Exs. EPME-20 at 3:1 n.2; EPME-20 at 7:10-13.

[456] Dennis Schiffel, an employee of the Nevada Companies, asserts that modification of contracts will not have an impact on investor confidence in the market. Ex. NEV-4. This testimony does not rebut the testimony cited above. Snohomish witness McCullough also asserts that contract modification will provide notice to the market that the Commission will

161. The evidence in this case indicates that abrogation or modification of these contracts will harm credit and investor confidence by altering the perception of a formerly stable cash flow into an undependable, risky cash flow. [457] Moreover, the evidence in this case demonstrates that modification of the contracts would cause market participants to suffer adverse credit and financial consequences, which could lead to hesitancy to enter into forward contracts, because of the uncertainty of the enforceability of such contracts.[458]

162. As witness Boland testified, if there is a perception of unstable cash flow triggered by contract modification, this would result in a "domino effect." This could cause the following: (1) some investors may view the regulatory risk for the energy merchant sector to be too unpredictable and avoid committing capital to this sector in the future;[459] (2) abrogation or modification of the contracts could be a signal that FERC would be willing to do the same for any other buyer or seller, which would cause an industry-wide impact; (3) energy merchants with generation assets financed, directly or indirectly, with project finance debt, could find

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act to protect markets from the exercise of market power and market manipulation. This unsubstantiated testimony does not rebut the testimony cited above. Therefore, it is found that Complainants' arguments in this regard are not persuasive.

[457] Ex. EPME-20 at 8:9-13.

[458] Suppliers may be reluctant to enter into forward contracts and take on the regulatory risk and uncertainty that the Commission could modify contracts in the future. Exs. RES-10 at 6:19-23; BP-1 at 10:16-21, 11:18-12:18; MSC-7 at 9:9-10.

[459] Given the significant on-going capital requirements of industry participants, such a reduction in available capital could hamper the growth of energy merchants and restrict their ability to meet future energy needs.

themselves in a payment default on debt obligations or a covenant default relating to project or financing agreements, or both; (4) the creditworthiness of energy merchants could be adversely impacted; (5) an energy merchant's financial flexibility and liquidity could deteriorate if the contracts modified or abrogated constitute a sizeable portion of the merchant's expected revenue base; (6) an energy merchant could suffer credit deterioration that forces it to incur additional costs to comply with requirements to post additional cash collateral or letters of credit to back up trading positions.[460]

163. Respondents argue that the fact that the Commission set these cases for hearing has itself increased uncertainty in the power markets. In support, they cite reports discussing rating downgrades in the U.S. power and energy sector, which exceed ratings upgrades by a ratio of 5:1.[461] Another factor mentioned by Respondents is that suppliers would be discouraged from entering into contracts, especially at times of short supply when suppliers are most needed. This, in turn, would raise prices by removing the disciplining effect of the threat of entry on forward prices."[462] Furthermore, Respondents maintain that modifying the contracts at issue in this case may require energy merchants to unwind "a hedged position vis-a-vis forward fuel or power purchases made to fill forward power sales."[463] This will leave the energy merchant "with an out-of-market gas or power purchase contract, a stranded investment in generation assets, or both.[464] Drs. Hogan and Harvey also explain that

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[460] Ex. EPME-20 at 4:5-10.

[461] Exs. EPME-41 at 9; MAEM-77.

[462] Ex. MSC-65 at 147:14-18.

[463] Ex. EPME-20 at 5:5-.

[464] Ex. EPME-20 at 5:7-9.

permitting regulatory reform of contracts " could have worse effects on forward markets than permitting abrogation if sellers that entered into forward contracts risked being required to provide price hedges that would be uneconomic based on the 'reformed contracts.'"[465] These statements are supported by record evidence and are persuasive.

164. These are serious consequences which could erode investor confidence and willingness to invest in merchant energy projects. This, in turn, could have an adverse effect on infrastructure development, especially at a time when Western markets need new generation and transmission. Additionally, this could have detrimental effects on Commission efforts to promote and develop competitive wholesale power markets. Furthermore, contract modification in this case could result in increased prices to compensate for increased risks.[466] Respondents' witness, Professor Kalt, states that abrogation of contracts would increase the price thresholds at which generators would choose to invest, raising the overall level of competitive prices to consumers. He further states that competitive prices rise when there are greater risks, because competitive prices must compensate generators for the risks they undertake when investing in new plant(s).[467] This testimony is entitled to substantial weight.

165. Additionally, modification of these long-term contracts may preclude sellers from ever making a profit on the transaction. Staff's arguments in this regard are persuasive. Resetting a contract rate now, based upon today's forecasts, raises the possibility that the contract may have to

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[465] Ex. MSC-1 at 30:20-31:2.

[466] Exs. MAEM-2 at 26:17-21; MSC-7 at 8:20-22.

[467] Ex. EPME-1 at 73:8-13.

be revisited again in the future, based upon future events. Either result would interfere with competitive markets. Many of the sellers in this case did not own generation or have generation assets that serve the market in question.[468] Under these circumstances, the sellers must purchase power in the open market at prevailing market rates. The record in this case establishes that Respondents covered their forward contracts by purchasing hedges, or forward contracts of their own.[469] The record establishes that Respondents entered into hedging arrangements when the overall balance of their portfolios demanded it, based on their own internal risk parameters.[470] As a result, it is difficult to determine the costs of the hedging contracts with the contracts at issue in this case.[471] It is a reasonable inference, supported by the

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[468] Morgan Stanley Power Development Corp, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Morgan Stanley, has an ownership interest in Naniwa Energy LLC, which owns a 360 MW peaking plant in McCarren, Nevada. This plant did not commence commercial operation until the end of June 2001 (after the relevant period in this case). Ex. MSC-7 at 4:10-13. El Paso owns or controls under 80 MWS of generation and does not own or control any transmission or distribution facilities in the WECC and has no retail load obligations in the WECC. Ex. EPME-22 at 3:21-4:14.

[469] Exs. MAEM-2 at 25; MSC-7 at 3 and 10; EPME-22 at 22; Tr. 3014-15; 3030, 3433-35; 3445; 4208; MSC-21 at 18:4-5. Morgan Stanley hedges its entire position in the WSCC power market and adjusts its overall power portfolio on a daily basis. The practical effect of the Snohomish/Morgan Stanley contract is that, Mogan Stanley essentially lent Snohomish money at the front end for expected value at the back end. Ex. MSC-21 at 18:22-19:4.

[470] Tr. 3194, 3198.

[471] Respondents argue that the Commission's advisory benchmark is not relevant to the contracts at issue in this proceeding. The Nevada Companies' contracts do not fall within the parameters of the advisory benchmark (they had shorter terms and were standardized contracts, for either on-peak or off-peak delivery, not round-the-clock). Moreover, the advisory benchmark was based on rates of return approved for the California IOUs. These arguments are persuasive. Additionally, it is

record, to find that Respondents were paying prices in the same price range as those reflected in the contracts in dispute, due to the fact that they were buying the hedges in the same market as they were selling to the Complainants in this case. Additionally, to the extent a seller was hedging a long term contract, such as Snohomish's or SCWC's, which have prices below market upfront, the seller likely hedged the contract with high-cost power upfront for which it will not be reimbursed until later years. [472] Consequently, reformation of the contracts is not warranted in this case.[473] To conclude otherwise would deprive Respondents of the benefits of their bargains, since they have already incurred costs associated with these contracts, either through hedging the contracts or delivery of the power.[474] As Staff witness Forman testified, "it would cast a pall over any future negotiations, and possibly increase the sellers' risk-related costs, if a seller always had to be concerned that the market in which it was participating at the moment might later be found to be "dysfunctional" and contracts entered into during the period of dysfunction made subject to retroactive adjustment." [475] The record supports the finding that Complainants have failed to prevail on this issue and therefore, these contracts should not be modified.

166. The findings and conclusions above demonstrate that Complainants failed to show adverse effects warranting

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found that the issue is moot based on the resolution of Issue number II, above.

[472] Tr. at 3022-23.

[473] Morgan Stanley would incur losses if the contracts are modified. Tr. at 4302:18-20; Tr. at 4302:20-22.

[474] Mirant suggested that it has incurred an average price of over $232/MWh to cover the cost of power delivered to SCWC in 2001 at a contract price of $95/MWh. Ex. MAEM-2 at 25.

[475] Ex. S-1 at 31.

contract modification. As a matter of fact, the evidence shows that it would be contrary to the public interest to modify the contracts at issue in this case.

Issue IV.

Whether the term of the contract and the collateral annex between the Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County, Washington and Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. are contrary to the public interest?

A. Parties Contentions:

167. Snohomish requests that the Commission either immediately terminate or substantially reform the collateral annex ("collateral annex"). [476] As a threshold matter, Snohomish argues that the just and reasonable standard, rather than the public interest standard applies to the evaluation of the annex.[477] The Commission did not address the applicable standard for the annex.[478] Snohomish avers that the dysfunctional market lead to the implementation of the annex. [479] Snohomish argues that, due to the high electricity prices in the spot market, it sought to fill between 75 and 100 megawatts in the long-term market.[480] Only three firms offered to supply 25 megawatts each, with Morgan Stanley offering this amount at $105 per megawatt hour, for a nine-year term and subject to a collateral annex. [481] Snohomish considered these terms too long in duration, and

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[476] Snohomish IB at 1.

[477] Id. at 1.

[478] Id. at 1-2.

[479] Id. at 2.

[480] Id. at 2-3.

[481] Id. at 3

the prices unjust, unreasonable, and contrary to the public interest.[482]

168. Snohomish contends that the annex is unreasonable on its face.[483] Morgan Stanley required acceptance of the annex as a condition to the underlying contract for power.[484] Snohomish's past experience with creditworthiness agreements, namely, with the Bonneville Power Administration and the WSPP agreement, are less onerous than the terms and conditions of Morgan Stanley's annex.[485] In addition, Snohomish contends that, at the time of negotiations, they did not understand how the annex "works in practice."[486] Further, Snohomish argues that Morgan Stanley knew that the annex was unreasonable and that such a requirement was not even a typical part of Morgan Stanley's past transactions.[487]

169. Snohomish also alleges that since it poses minimal risk, the collateral annex is not even necessary, since several independent rating agencies have given Snohomish high credit ratings.[488] Further, Snohomish's structure minimizes credit risk, since their governing Board of Commissioners can independently set rates, and by statute, Snohomish is required to set rates and maintain revenue sufficient to recover the cost of power.[489] In fact, a month prior to

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[482] Id.

[483] Id. at 3.

[484] Id. at 3-4.

[485] Id. at 4.

[486] Id.

[487] Id. at 5.

[488] Id. at 5-6.

[489] Id. at 6.

execution of the Morgan Stanley contract, Snohomish implemented a rate increase sufficient to pay for the contract.[490] In addition, Snohomish is also less risky than others entities for the following reasons: Snohomish's revenues are derived directly from the final customers, Snohomish hedges its contract position with Morgan Stanley, Snohomish is required to maintain a minimum debt coverage, Snohomish's bond covenants prioritize payments to creditors (such as Morgan Stanley), Snohomish's internal risk management policies prohibit risky purchase commitments, and Morgan Stanley was aware that Snohomish posed a low credit risk.[491]

170. Snohomish accepted the collateral annex because Morgan Stanley Capital Group refused to hold its prices firm.[492] In addition, the collateral annex poses a threat to the Commission's fundamental policy of achieving robust wholesale electric markets, for the following reasons.[493] First, as applied to a load-serving entity like Snohomish, the annex produces a perverse result, whereby the collateral requirement moves in the opposite direction of the credit risk.[494] Second, in other commodity markets, including electricity, collateral requirements are not favored as credit risk management tools in over-the-counter bilateral contracts, and thus, are not widely used in the industry.[495] Third, should such use become prevalent, the industry's recent credit problems could increase.[496] Fourth, terms such

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[490] Id.

[491] Id. at 6-8.

[492] Id. at 9.

[493] Id. at 10.

[494] Id.

[495] Id. at 10-11.

[496] Id. at 11.

as those in the annex, significantly increase barriers to entry, increase financing costs, transaction costs, administrative costs/ burdens, and total power-supply costs.[497]

171. The collateral annex includes various onerous terms and thus, should be immediately terminated.[498] These terms include Morgan Stanley's role as valuation agent, whereby it exclusively can select the applicable forward price curves and discount rate, upon which the collateral demands are based, and this provision is not typical in the industry.[499] In addition, Snohomish maintains that Morgan Stanley's forward price curves are miscalculated, lack factual support and/or are based on sheer speculation.[500] Moreover, Morgan Stanley's discretion over selection of the discount rate allows them to arbitrarily raise the level of collateral, they have frequently abused their authority in administering the collateral annex and their setting of a low threshold amount is unduly discriminatory toward Snohomish.[501] The collateral annex does not allow: adequate time to post collateral, the earning of interest on cash collateral, adequate protections for posted funds, nor are the conditions governing the dispute resolution provisions fair.[502]

172. Under the collateral annex, Snohomish has incurred unnecessary costs. This includes $101 million in posted funds, $419,000 in related costs and the encumbrance of assets used to support credit lines opened to provide the collateral. This could increase interest costs, which, in turn,

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[497] Id.

[498] Snohomish IB at 12.

[499] Id. at 13.

[500] Id.

[501] Id. at 14-15.

[502] Id. at 15-16.

could lead to higher rates.[503] Moreover, Morgan Stanley is protected from risk even in the absence of the annex, since Morgan Stanley could seek liquidated damages equaling the mark-to-market value of the contract if Snohomish terminates the contract.[504] Snohomish avers that Morgan Stanley's true motive for seeking the collateral annex is for increased leverage for future negotiations.[505] Finally, Snohomish argues that Morgan Stanley's rejection of Snohomish's suggested alternatives to the collateral annex, such as a surety bond, are not justifiable.[506]

173. Morgan Stanley asserts that The MSCG/ Snohomish Contract and the collateral annex cannot be modified without proving they are contrary to the public interest. The Commission stated that parties such as Snohomish who seek contractual modification carry a heavy burden requiring a showing of extraordinary circumstances.[507] Further, the Mobile-Sierra doctrine is the applicable standard for the Snohomish contract and collateral annex, which requires proving that the rate could adversely affect the public interest.[508]

174. In addition, Morgan Stanley avers that there are two standards, one stricter than the other.[509] Snohomish's claims must be reviewed under the stricter public interest standard of review, because the case meets the necessary criteria, the

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[503] Id. at 17.

[504] Id. at 18.

[505] Id.

[506] Id. at 18-19.

[507] Morgan Stanley IB at 4.

[508] Id. at 4.

[509] Id. at 6-7.

contract meets the just and reasonable standard, and there has been a unilateral challenge to a contractual term.[510] Snohomish's claim is similar to its claims in another case, which the court dismissed, after applying the stricter public interest standard, and so, its claims in this proceeding should suffer the same fate.[511]

175. Snohomish failed to prove that the term of the contract impairs its financial ability to continue to serve its ratepayers. According to Morgan Stanley, Snohomish failed to prove that the term of the contract is excessively burdensome on wholesale and retail customers, since Snohomish's evidence consisted of only the conclusory opinions of six ratepayers.[512] Snohomish failed to establish that the term of the contract is unduly discriminatory, since the existence of contracts with shorter terms does not prove discrimination, in the absence of other evidence.[513]

176. Snohomish did not prove that the collateral annex violates the public interest. Morgan Stanley argues that it did not act unreasonably in administering the collateral annex, the terms of the annex are fair, and the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard of review applies to the collateral annex since the Commission already decided that the public interest standard applies to the contract.[514]

177. Snohomish's challenges to the collateral annex are unfounded and contradicted by its own records and witnesses. Specifically, Morgan Stanley contends that its role

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[510] Id.

[511] Id. at 7-8.

[512] Id. at 9.

[513] Id. at 11.

[514] Id. at 12.

as the valuation agent does not give it an undue advantage over Snohomish, in that Snohomish is at liberty to conduct its own mark-to market and exposure calculations. [515] Second, Snohomish's contention that Morgan Stanley's forward price curves are speculative or fabricated based on duration, lacks merit, since Snohomish's files contain forward price curves (predating their complaint) extending to the year 2008 and Snohomish's expert lacked knowledge of how Morgan Stanley derived its curve.[516] Third, Morgan Stanley has acted in a commercially reasonable manner in administering the collateral annex. Fourth, Snohomish cannot complain about the dispute resolution provision, since it understood and accepted the provision. [517] Fifth, Snohomish cannot complain about the lack of provision in the Annex for interest payment(s) on cash collateral since it applies to both parties equally and Snohomish has never posted any such cash collateral.[518]

178. Moreover, Snohomish's contention that Morgan Stanley refused to reduce Snohomish's posted collateral is incorrect because Snohomish delayed for several months to demand a collateral reduction and when requested, Morgan Stanley agreed to it.[519] Morgan Stanley also avers that the opinion of Snohomish's witnesses should be accorded little weight because neither witness was qualified in credit risk management nor did either witness analyze the annex with the requisite care, diligence, and objectivity.[520] In addition, Staff's witness, Mr. Shriver, failed to understand that Morgan

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[515] Id. at 13.

[516] Id. at 13.

[517] Id. at 14.

[518] Id.

[519] Id.

[520] Id. at 15.

Stanley's discretionary role as the Valuation Agent is constrained by the provision requiring good faith and a commercially reasonable performance, with the term defined under both the Uniform Commercial Code and Commission application in past contract disputes.[521] Finally, the annex does not impair Snohomish from providing continued service, nor does it impose an excessive burden or unduly discriminate against third parties, but is just and reasonable and a sound credit risk management tool consistent with the public interest.[522]

179. Morgan Stanley alleges that utilities may have a strong public credit rating one month and may not be a creditworthy entity a few month(s) later. It asked that judicial notice be taken of the fact that from 1997 to 2002, Standard and Poor ("S&P") decreased public ratings of at least forty-four load-serving entities below investment grade and submitted an exhibit attached to its reply brief.[523] Modification of the collateral annex will have a chilling effect on the wholesale power market, Morgan Stanley maintains. Additionally, the Commission should not substitute its judgment for the business judgment of market participants who must analyze and manage credit risk on a daily basis, according to Morgan Stanley.

180. Staff argues that the appropriate standard of review for the collateral annex is "just and reasonable." According to Staff, the collateral annex is unjust, unreasonable and unduly discriminatory because it gives Morgan Stanley advantages vis-a-vis a "monopolistic load-serving entity posing little risk of default in light of less onerous provisions

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[521] Id. at 16-17.

[522] Id. at 17-18.

[523] Morgan Stanley RB at 12.

that MSG could have used to mitigate its risk adequately, and in light of the circumstances under which the parties executed the contract." Staff argues that the contract did not waive the parties § 206 rights with respect to the terms and conditions (as opposed to the rates) and that the Commission has never reviewed this collateral annex. Morgan Stanley and Snohomish limited the Mobil-Sierra clause to "rates," thus, allowing for the just and reasonable standard to apply to provisions not imbedded within the common definition of rate. Staff concludes that the collateral annex is unjust and unreasonable because: it designates Morgan Stanley as the sole valuation agent (determines the amount of collateral either party must post); Morgan Stanley as sole valuation agent determines the "Mark-to-Market Value" (the amount that the non-defaulting party would have to pay to a third-party to fulfill the defaulting party's obligations, minus a threshold amount based on the party's credit rating); the Valuation Agent can set the discount rate (Morgan Stanley's estimate of its own internal cost of borrowing) and the forward price curves.

181. According to Staff, the discount estimate lacks transparency since it is not a public rate, and verification would be difficult. There is a possibility this discount rate may be low because Morgan Stanley would provide itself a low and economical interest rate. A low discount rate would require more collateral. The estimation of the forward price curves nine years into the future is highly speculative. The Valuation Agent may select four reference market-makers and take the arithmetic average of the quotes obtained, in instances of dispute. Staff maintains that other standardized collateral annexes do not appoint one of the two parties as the sole Valuation Agent or to select the market makers. For instance, the Edison Electric Institute Master Power Purchase and Sale Agreement (EEI) allows each party to

calculate its own exposure to the other party.[524] The WSPP Agreement and the International Swaps and Derivatives Association, Inc. Master Agreement (IsDA Agreement) provide that the demanding party may calculate the amount of collateral. The cost of the collateral is $419,000 per year to maintain a $92 million Letter of Credit or an increase of $1.89 in the cost of power per MWh per year. Staff acknowledges two issues: that even if the collateral annex is modified, the collateral required from Snohomish would still be substantial; that the Commission should consider whether load serving entities, should have to deal with these types of contractual provisions.

182. Additionally, Staff argues that the following conditions make the collateral annex contrary to the public interest. First, it was Morgan Stanley who first proposed the collateral annex. Second, Morgan Stanley told Snohomish the collateral annex was standard. Third, the Morgan Stanley credit department emphasized that due to the contract price, the collateral annex included "every bell and whistle."[525]

C. Discussion/Findings:

183. In Issues II and III above, it was found that the term of the contract between these two parties is not contrary to the public interest and thus, the contract does not require modification. Therefore, this discussion is limited to the collateral annex. In addition to the facts set out above under Issue III, concerning Snohomish's negotiations of the

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[524] Staff IB at 46.

[525] Staff IB at 51, including recommendations for modifying the collateral annex (both parties calculate the Mark to Market; objective standards for the discount rate, cash should earn interest, both parties should be valuation agents, failure to return collateral should incur default).

transaction at issue in this proceeding, the evidence shows that Morgan Stanley and Snohomish discussed the terms of the collateral annex during the negotiations, including the mark-to-market collateralization provisions, and their potential effect on Snohomish.[526] It appeared that Snohomish was familiar with financial credit requirements.[527] Snohomish and Morgan Stanley exchanged written comments concerning the form of collateral annex, and several telephone conversations concerning the terms of the collateral annex. Snohomish not only understood, but did preliminary calculations of its exposure depending on different pricing scenarios.[528] Morgan Stanley's in-house attorney and Snohomish personnel and counsel reviewed step-by-step, the collateral annex and other provisions of the contract.[529]

184. At the outset, it must be pointed out that the Snohomish/Morgan Stanley Confirmation Agreement specifically states "Terms used but not defined herein shall have the meaning ascribed to them in the WSPP Agreement as amended by Attachment "A."[530] Attachment "A" (Additional Special Provisions, Amendment to WSPP Agreement) states in its very first paragraph:

> By this Attachment to the Confirmation

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[526] Exs. MSC-11, Vol. IV at 102:11-104:21; 107:1-108:9; MSC-16 (KH 1/25/01, 18:18 Side B); MSC-8 at 15:18-16:4; MSC-127; MSC-130; MSC-131.

[527] Exs. MSC-55 at 7:4-7; MSC-55 at 7:12-13.

[528] Exs. MSC-55 at 2:1-6; MSC-158; MSC-171-173; Tr. at 4144:17-4148:10; MSC-55 at 2:1-22; MSC-122; Tr. at 1761:14-1762:10.

[529] Exs. MSC-11, Vol. VIII at 31:3-52:14; MSC-16 (KH 1/26/01, 19:26:01, side A); MSC-11, Vol. IX at 12:13-36:4; MSC-16 (KH 1/26/01 21:35 side A).

[530] Ex. SNO-6.

> Agreement, Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. ("MSCG") and Public Utility District #1 of Snohomish County ("Snohomish") (individually a "Party" and collectively the "Parties") agree to amend certain sections of the WSPP Agreement,... in accordance with the guidelines of the Western System Power Pool guidelines and procedures (the "WSPP Agreement"). All references in the WSPP Agreement to "this Agreement" shall be deemed to include this Attachment "A." In the event of any conflict between the terms of this Attachment "A" and the terms of the WSPP Agreement, the terms of this Attachment "A" shall prevail. In the event of any conflict between the terms of any Confirmation Agreement and the terms of this Attachment "A," the Confirmation Agreements shall prevail.

185. The collateral annex, in its very first paragraph, states:

> [t]his collateral annex supplements, forms a part of, and is subject to, the Western Systems Power Pool ("WSPP") Agreement... and the Attachment "A" Additional Special Provisions Amendment to the WSPP Agreement, dated January 26, 2001 (collectively, the "Master Agreement") between Public Utility District #1 of Snohomish County ("Counterparty") and Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. ("MSCG"). The obligations of Counterparty under the Master Agreement shall be secured in accordance with the provisions of this collateral annex, which sets forth the conditions under which a Party will be required to deliver cash, securities and other property, as well as the conditions under which a Party will release such

Collateral.

186. Section 35 of the WSPPA provides in pertinent part: "... that all transactions, together with this Agreement and the related Confirmation Agreement(s) form a single, integrated agreement, and agreements and transactions are entered into in reliance on the fact that the agreements and each transaction form a single agreement between the Parties."

187. By virtue of this language, the collateral annex has been made a part of the WSPPA. Attachment "A" to the Confirmation Agreement specifically states: "The rates for service specified in this Agreement shall remain in effect for the terms of this Agreement and shall not be subject to change through application to FERC pursuant to the provisions of Section 205 or 206 of the Federal Power Act."[531]

188. Staff's arguments that the collateral annex should be reviewed under the just and reasonable standard are found not persuasive for three reasons. Number one, the language of the collateral annex makes it part of the WSPPA. Under Issue I, above, it was ruled that the standard to be applied under the WSPPA to determine whether the contracts should be modified, is the public interest standard. Moreover, on reconsideration, the Commission held that the Snohomish Morgan Stanley contract would be reviewed under the public interest standard. The collateral annex is part of the contract. Therefore, review of the terms of the collateral annex has to be under the public interest standard. As discussed above, under the public interest standard, it was found that Snohomish has not met its burden for modification of the

[531] SNO-6, Attachment A (§ 39B "Fixed Rates").

contracts at issue in this case.[532] Number two, the Commission specified that the issue in this proceeding was whether the dysfunctional California spot markets had an adverse effect on the long term bilateral markets in California, Nevada and Washington. Under Issue II above, it was found that Complainants had not established that the dysfunctional California spot markets adversely affected the Western long-term bilateral markets. Therefore, Snohomish has not proved that the collateral annex should be modified. Number three, Staff's own arguments make clear that the collateral annex is part of the "rate" of this contract, and therefore, subject to the public interest standard of review. This should conclude the analysis of this issue. However, in order to establish a clear record, further analysis is provided.[533]

189. The terms of the Morgan Stanley/Snohomish contract (the Confirmation Agreement, Attachment A and the collateral annex) support the conclusions reached above. Attachment A to the Morgan Stanley/Snohomish "Master Agreement" purports to amend the WSPPA. Attachment A amends Section 4; 9.1; 12.2; 22.1; 24; 27; 28; 37 and adds new sections 12A, B and C; 24A; 39A, B and C. New Section 39B (added in Attachment A, to modify the end of the WSPPA) is titled "Fixed Rates" and states: "The rates for service specified in this Agreement shall remain in effect for

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[532] Staff recommends that the Commission should determine whether load-serving entities should be held to these kinds of requirements. This is a policy determination for the Commission.

[533] Staff argues that the collateral annex is unjust and unreasonable and contrary to the public interest because it discriminates against Snohomish. Under Mobile-Sierra, discrimination does not cover discrimination to a party to the challenged contract. The standard of undue discrimination would be applicable to the detriment of purchasers who are not parties to the contract. *Papago Tribal Authority v. FERC*, 723 F.2d 950, 953 n. 4 (D.C. Cir. 1983).

the terms of this Agreement and shall not be subject to change through application to FERC pursuant to the provisions of Section 205 or 206 of the Federal Power Act." It is significant that new Section 39B makes no mention of Section 6.1.[534] Therefore, reading the WSPPA and the Morgan Stanley/Snohomish contract together, it is concluded that Section 6.1 of the WSPPA applies to the "classification, service, terms or conditions affecting WSPP transactions." This is due to the fact that the parties in drafting Section 39B did not refer or modify Section 6.1 of the WSPPA. Therefore, Section 6.1 of the WSPPA applies to the collateral annex which is part of the contract, e.g. "the terms, conditions, etc."[535]

190. The evidence in this case does not establish that the collateral annex is contrary to the public interest. For instance, Snohomish can make its own mark-to-market calculations. Snohomish has made such calculations and

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[534] Section 6.1 of the WSPPA, titled "Service Schedules and WSPP Default Transmission Tariff," provides in pertinent part: The Parties contemplate that they may, from time to time, add or remove Service Schedules under this Agreement. The attached Service Schedules A through C for Economy Energy Service, Unit Commitment Service, and Firm System Capacity/Energy Sale or Exchange Service are hereby approved and made a part of this Agreement. Nothing contained herein shall be construed as affecting in any way the right of the Parties to jointly make application to FERC for a change in the rates and charges, classification, service, terms or conditions affecting WSPP transactions under Section 205 of the Federal Power Act and pursuant to FERC rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. Id.

[535] See discussion under issues I, II and III, supra. Moreover, this rationale would apply to Snohomish's argument that the "nine year term of the contract" is not subject to the changes effected by the parties to the WSPPA at Section 39 B, since the evidence in this case, specifically the evidence cited concerning contract negotiation, proves that the rates are intertwined with the contract length. Moreover, the same would be applicable to the collateral annex since, arguably, it also affects the "rates."

used them to challenge Morgan Stanley's calculations.[536] In 2001, Snohomish itself had forward curves which extended to 2008.[537] This belies the allegation that such forward curves are speculative. Moreover, the collateral annex requires Morgan Stanley to administer it in a commercially reasonable manner.[538] The discount factor used by Morgan Stanley has ranged between 4.5 to 6.5%.[539] Morgan Stanley has not terminated the contract, even though Snohomish has not posted collateral on a timely basis.[540] The parties have resolved their differences amicably without resort to the formal dispute resolution procedures. The collateral annex requires that Morgan Stanley act in "good faith," in the selection of four dealers in the relevant market, and to provide quotes in the case of formal dispute resolution.[541] The lack of an interest provision for cash collateral applies to both parties. Snohomish has never posted cash collateral.[542]

191. Snohomish's witnesses, Kemp and Adams, testified as to the unreasonableness of the collateral annex. This testimony will not be given substantial weight. Mr. Kemp is not qualified to testify on credit risk. This witness has never negotiated bilateral commodity contracts with credit support

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[536] Ex. MSC-94 at 2:17-19; Tr. at 1872:23-1873:7; MSC-128; MSC-169; Tr. at 4391:7-11; Tr. at 1878:1-6;

[537] Tr. at 1857:6-18. Exs. MSC-119 at 6; MSC-124 at 12; MSC-117; MSC-166.

[538] Exs. MSC-21; MSC-96; MSC-94.

[539] Ex. MSC-94 at 9:17-19.

[540] Tr. at 1880; Ex. MSC-89 at 4:11-5:12; MSC-87 at 5:1-6; MSC-169.

[541] Tr. at 1878:1-6; Tr. at 1873:133-21; Exs MSC-128; MSC-94 at 3:10-15.

[542] Ex. MSC-177 at 84; MSC-60 at 3; MSC-60 at 4 P 5(a); MSC-94 at 2:8- 5:6; Tr. at 1872:4-7; 1871:12-18.

terms or managed credit risk in his employment history.[543] Additionally, Mr. Adams did not review materials or study relevant documents or information to support his opinions.[544] Conversely, Morgan Stanley's witness testified that the credit department of Morgan Stanley was concerned about Snohomish's ability and willingness to comply with its contractual obligations. Morgan Stanley conducted its own internal and independent credit review of Snohomish and Morgan Stanley's potential exposure under the proposed transaction. Morgan Stanley did not rely solely on the public credit rating of Snohomish's debt in making its credit risk assessment.[545] This testimony is given substantial weight.

192. The language of the collateral annex requires Morgan Stanley to act in a commercially reasonable manner. This is a term of art which is used in other forums and this

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[543] Tr. at 2413:4-7; Tr at 2413:13-2414:10.

[544] For instance, he testified that he did not know how Morgan Stanley derives its forward curves; he was not aware that a Snohomish Senior Manager reported that Morgan Stanley's forward curves are consistent with independent forward curves; he did not review Snohomish's forward curves; he did not review the entire contract; he was not familiar with the negotiations underlying the contract, and he did not perform any studies of spot and forward markets. Tr. at 2082:3-9; Tr. at 2083:9-21; Tr. at 2084:24-2085:11; Tr. at 2084:11-14; Tr. at 2089:3-14; Tr. at 2089:3-14; Tr. at 2092:19-24; Tr. at 2095:15-22; Tr. at 2099:13-21; Tr. at 2108:8-12.

[545] Tr. at 3908. Mr. Lupiano testified that the collateral annex should include "every bell and whistle because these are the ones they try to figure out how to walk on." Id. Snohomish admitted that but for the collateral annex it would not have performed its contractual obligations to Morgan Stanley. Tr. at 3504:3-3509:17. Morgan Stanley's request in its reply brief that judicial notice be taken of S&P ratings will be denied as untimely. MSC RB at 13. The record in this proceeding was closed at the end of the hearing on October 24, 2002.

Commission has recognized it.[546] The WSPPA, the NYISO, NEPOOL and PJM tariffs all contain the term "commercially reasonable manner."[547] The EEI collateral annex and the WSPP collateral annex require the parties to act in good faith and in a "commercially reasonable" manner.[548] The Uniform Commercial Code uses the term "commercially reasonable." The WSPPA requires non-defaulting parties to calculate in a reasonable manner the gains, losses and costs resulting from a terminated transaction.[549] The EEI Master Agreement requires the non-defaulting party to "calculate, in a commercially reasonable manner, a Settlement Amount for each... Terminated Transaction."[550] The EEI collateral annex requires the secured party to calculate the "current mark-to-market value" of the contract in a commercially reasonable manner.[551] The NEPOOL tariff financial assurance policy requires NEPOOL to use commercially reasonable credit review procedures to assess the financial ability of applicants for membership, and can require generator owners to post a letter of credit as security.[552]

193. The evidence in this case shows that the collateral annex does not impair Snohomish's ability to continue its service, does not impose an excessive burden, nor does it unduly discriminate. The per-ratepayer cost of providing collateral (based upon current net exposure under the

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[546] *Entergy Louisiana, Inc.*, 99 FERC 61,199 at 61,827 (2002); *In re NE Hub Partners, L.P.*, 90 FERC 61,142 at 61,431 (2000). See also, *Coca-Cola Bottling Co. v. Coca-Cola Co.*, 4 F.3d 930 at 936 (10th Cir. 1993).

[547] Exs. MSC-174; 175; 176 (official notice taken).

[548] Exs. MSC 61; 64; 57 at 27:2-5; 33:9-10; 34:1-2.

[549] Ex. NPC-14 at § 22.3.

[550] Ex. MSC-120, Sec. 5.2.

[551] Ex. MSC-61.

[552] Ex. MSC-174.

collateral annex) is seventy-five cents per year. Staff's assertion that the cost of the letter of credit is burdensome is inconsistent with Staff's previous arguments under issues II and III, above, namely that the contract does not impose an excessive burden because it only has a five percent effect on rates. Moreover, as discussed under issues II and III and V, the nine-year term of the contract is not contrary to the public interest. In light of the above, it is found that the Snohomish/Morgan Stanley contract should not be modified. The evidence in this case shows that the parties negotiated at arms-length. Accordingly, it is found that the public interest standard applies to the collateral annex. It is also found that the collateral annex is not contrary to the public interest. Accordingly it is found that contract modification is not warranted, thereby allowing the contracts which set forth the business judgment of the parties concerning their credit risks to remain as negotiated.[553]

Issue V.

Whether the complainants have satisfied their burden under the applicable just and reasonable or public interest standard?

A. Parties Contentions:

194. The Nevada Companies maintain that the appropriate

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[553] In its reply brief, Snohomish cites *New York ISO v. Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc.*, 98 FERC 61077, at 61,232-33 (2002) for the proposition that FERC has terminated or modified collateral requirements to protect consumers. Snohomish RB at 9. This case is totally inapposite, since it deals with compliance filings of the NYISO for a tariff to implement a new market mechanism. It does not deal with two power marketers entering into a bona-fide arms length transaction. Moreover, the Commission approved credit policies which required collateral, removing only the minimum collateral requirements.

standard for judging the contract prices at issue in this case is the just and reasonable standard. Alternatively, assuming the standard was the public interest, consumers would be served by reducing the prices in the contracts to the level that would have been set had there been no market dysfunction.[554] According to the Nevada Companies, the contract prices in this case are the product of dysfunctional markets, and are significantly higher than the marginal cost of production. Therefore, the Commission should determine and fix the just and reasonable prices.

195. The Nevada Companies contend that the Commission is obligated to protect the public interest, which includes the interest of consumers in having access to an adequate supply of power at a reasonable rate.[555] According to the Nevada Companies, Respondents' shareholders have no statutory right or expectation to collect the specific prices in the contracts. If the prices are not mitigated, the Nevada Companies assert, all the cost burden of the market dysfunction and exorbitant prices will be placed entirely on the Nevada Companies, load serving entities, and their customers.[556]

196. The Nevada Companies contend that they purchased the energy at issue in this proceeding to serve their load obligations and avoid risks of shortages. They maintain that, in April 2001, when the State reversed its course concerning restructuring of energy markets, it was faced with having to purchase power for later years.[557] The Nevada Companies maintain that they did not purchase significant amounts of

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[554] Nevada Companies IB at 35.

[555] Id. at 37.

[556] Id. at 38.

[557] Nevada Companies RB at 36.

power to resell it, and seventy percent of their $100 million revenues are location basis swaps made to substitute for transmission rights.[558] Remaining sales were made solely because the Nevada Companies' load did not perfectly match the standard 6x16 product, and selling off power in the shoulder hours is an appropriate way to reduce power costs for the consumer.[559] The power supply contracts at issue in this case have had a devastating effect on the Nevada Companies' financial position, e.g., credit downgrades, no credit facilities for much of 2002, and difficulty securing supply.[560]

197. Additionally, the Nevada Companies aver that contract modification serves the public interest because such action would ensure the integrity of the nation's energy markets, a benefit to both consumers and investors.[561] The Commission cannot rely on market prices to ensure just and reasonable rates because such an approach retains the false illusion that a government agency is keeping watch over rates, when it is in fact doing no such thing, the Nevada Companies allege. In circumstances such as these, the Commission is fulfilling its statutory duty by intervening to assure that market-based prices are just and reasonable, due to the fact that government regulators urged the Nevada Companies to "increase their reliance upon the forward markets." The Nevada Companies argue that it would be egregious and unfair for the Commission to refuse to modify unjust and unreasonable forward contract prices.[562] In

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[558] Id. at 37.

[559] Id. at 38.

[560] Id. at 39.

[561] The Nevada Companies argue that dysfunctional forward market prices provide wrong signals to market participants, for example, in the development of new generation capacity. Id. at 41.

[562] Id. at 41.

addition, the Nevada Companies argue that pushing load-serving entities into the forward markets and then providing relief only to those who stay in the spot markets is likely to lead to vertical integration and a return to cost-of-service regulation.[563]

198. The Nevada Companies assert that parties should be more willing to enter into short- and long-term power supply contracts if the Commission modifies the contracts at issue in this case. This is so because demonstrating that the market will be disciplined and fair should appeal to all parties and reduce the need for the Commission to intervene in the future. Suppliers had no reasonable expectation that the contract prices they charged could never be found to be unjust and unreasonable, since this is part of regulatory risks. The greater market certainty and enforcement of just and reasonable rates will provide incentives to invest in the market. In addition, the Nevada Companies assert that there should be no effect (or a positive effect) on energy investments from clear and effective rules requiring just and reasonable prices, and from the regulators who enforce those rules to ensure an effective and functioning competitive market.[564]

199. It is the Nevada Companies' contention that the action with the most severe impact on investments would be to deny relief to the Nevada Companies, due to the fact that their ability to invest in generation and transmission facilities has been hampered. Concerning the contract termination issue, the Nevada Companies assert that the issue was not designated in this case and that it is incumbent on Respondents to seek an order from the Commission setting

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[563] Id. at 42.

[564] Id. at 44

the termination issue for hearing.[565]

200. According to SCWC and Snohomish, the contracts are unjust and unreasonable because: (a) the language of the WSPPA and the underlying facts demonstrate that the parties intended the just and reasonable standard to apply; (b) the Mirant/SCWC contract has never been reviewed by the Commission; (c) the public interest standard cannot be applied in a "high-rate" case such as the one here.[566] Enumerating their arguments: (1) the $95/MWh rate greatly exceeds the $74/MWh; (2) competitive market forces did not ensure just and reasonable rates because too few sellers were competing for SCWC's business, spot market conditions made sellers reluctant to sell excess power, and other sellers focused on sales to DWR;[567] (3) wholesale sellers such as Mirant and Morgan Stanley had no incentive to enter into long-term contracts with buyers like SCWC and Snohomish at just and reasonable rates until FERC mitigated the dysfunctional spot markets beginning in April 2001.[568]

201. It was not until after the Commission's April 26, 2001 Order, that the spot market mitigation efforts impacted forward prices. However, these mitigation efforts, according to SCWC did not provide it with any relief. Only three sellers responded to SCWC's RFP and none offered a just and reasonable price, SCWC argues.[569] These circumstances compelled SCWC to enter into a contract with Mirant to secure the least "unjust and unreasonable" rate. SCWC states that it met its burden of proving that the contracts are

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[565] Nevada Companies RB at 26.

[566] SCWC and Snohomish IB at 48.

[567] Id. at 49.

[568] Id.

[569] Id. at 52.

contrary to the public interest. To wit, it argues that the contract price was the product of the dysfunctional California market, and the lack of liquidity and volatility in the forward markets left SCWC without alternatives. In addition, this company argues that the record shows that the dysfunctional spot markets were directly reflected in the prices charged in forward contracts during the first half of 2001, a possibility the Commission acknowledged in its November 1 Order and has repeatedly acknowledged since then. Further, the contract imposes undue burdens on third parties.

202. SCWC asserts that the purchase from Mirant is a baseload around-the-clock contract which accounts for a substantial majority of the MWhs purchased by SCWC. It maintains it purchased this power only to serve its load. The contract has a huge financial impact on SCWC and its ratepayers.[570] Ratepayers have seen a thirty-eight percent increase in their electric rate(s) due to a dysfunctional California marketplace. However, this estimate is small, due to the fact that SCWC has taken proactive mitigation efforts to lower its overall purchased power costs and the fact that it entered into a rate settlement approved by the CPUC on July 17, 2002, whereby SCWC's shareholders agreed to bear a portion of SCWC's purchased power costs (anything above $77/MWh).[571] Further, SCWC asserts that prior to entering into the Mirant contract, SCWC's average purchased power rate was $24.37/MWh. The Mirant contract represents more than a $70/MWh increase over SCWC's pre-Mirant contract rates. Compared to the $74 Commission imposed benchmark, the $21 dollar difference imposed upon SCWC and its ratepayers amounts to an additional $2.8 million per year. Reformation of the contracts arising out of the gross

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[570] Id. at 53.

[571] Id.

dysfunction of the California market, according to SCWC and Snohomish, would promote the Commission's policies of encouraging market-based reform of the electric markets by restoring faith in the markets and in FERC's willingness to police market abuses.[572]

203. Snohomish and SCWC maintain that the Morgan Stanley contract imposes an undue burden on Snohomish's consumers. The Morgan Stanley contract, according to these entities, will cost $2 million per month for Snohomish consumers. The Snohomish ratepayers have had rate increases of nearly sixty percent since the start of the Western wholesale energy crisis, mostly from the cost of electricity, SCWC and Snohomish argue.[573] The contract at issue in this case, Snohomish argues, is approximately five percent of overall rates (including transmission costs, local distribution, debt service, and other overheads, as well as power and are attributable to the Morgan Stanley contract), even though providing less than three percent of the Snohomish power supply portfolio. Indeed, Snohomish argues, over its term, the contract is $102 million above current market prices, or nearly twenty-eight percent of Snohomish's purchased power costs in 2001.[574] Snohomish maintains that these costs will be borne by Snohomish's ratepayers, since it is a government-owned utility which operates on a non-profit basis and has no shareholders to absorb the costs, and must pass-through all of its costs to

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[572] Id. at 54.

[573] Id. at 42.

[574] Id. at 43. Snohomish argues the costs of serving the contract are lower than the contract price since Morgan Stanley buys power from Snohomish in the short-term market at lower prices. Moreover, as a result of new accounting rules, Morgan Stanley would not have losses if the contract is abrogated.

consumers.[575]

204. The PUCN and the Nevada AG contend that the prudence of the Nevada Companies' purchasing decision is not before the Commission in this proceeding, since such an inquiry is within the sole authority of the PUCN.[576] In addition, the PUCN avers that the effects of granting the requested relief would be positive, rather than negative, as predicted by the Respondents.[577] In support, the PUCN asserts witness, Dr. William G. Shepherd, testified that reforming the contracts would "restore confidence in power markets and, ultimately, in the integrity of deregulation itself."[578] The PUCN contends that it supports Mr. Greenshield's admission that the market price already incorporates costs for increased regulatory and legal risks, so the relief in this proceeding could not cause "significantly higher prices," based on such risks.[579] Moreover, the PUCN argues that past accounting practices, excessive debt loads and fundamentally-flawed business models are also factors causing the problems in power markets, and thus, granting relief will not significantly increase such problems.[580] Finally, the PUCN, argues, that, even if, contractual modification does adversely affect investor confidence, this effect is far outweighed by the Commission's statutory duty of ensuring just and reasonable rates.[581]

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[575] Id. at 43.

[576] PUCN IB at 19-21.

[577] Id. at 21.

[578] Id. at 22.

[579] Id. at 23.

[580] Id. at 23-24.

[581] Id. at 24.

205. Respondents aver Complainants failed to satisfy their burden under either the public interest or the just and reasonable standard. Complainants have not shown that the challenged contracts are unduly discriminatory, impose an excessive burden, threaten the Companies' ability to serve their customers, and the Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof under the public interest standard. The Complainants have not demonstrated that the locational basis swap challenged in this case is unjust or unreasonable. Moreover, Respondents argue that the economic effect of the locational basis swaps should be gauged by focusing on the price differential of the transactions. In addition, Respondents argue Complainants have not shown that the fee received by certain Respondents for assisting the Nevada Companies to secure power when others were unwilling to sell directly to them is not reasonable. It would be patently unfair and arbitrary to impose a refund on a Respondent for a sleeve transaction when the corresponding upstream purchase is not subject to refund.

206. In addition, Respondents argue that the Nevada Companies failed to meet their burden with respect to their contracts with MSCG, Reliant, El Paso and Enron. This is so because the contracts have been terminated and no longer involve the physical delivery of power. According to Respondents, the Commission cannot retain jurisdiction over contracts that have been terminated and as such, do not result in the physical delivery of power. Therefore, Respondents aver that as a matter of law, the Commission cannot grant the relief sought by the Nevada Companies.

207. Staff argues that under the only prong of the public interest test applicable in this case, whether the contracts have caused severe financial distress on the utility or excessive burden on consumers, the Complainants have failed to meet their burden of proof. The contracts at issue do

not amount to a significant percentage of Complainants' load or costs. Additionally, Staff points out that none of the Complainants addressed the impact of the contracts on their rates, or the rates of their ratepayers. In its reply brief, Staff asserts that Respondents have not shown that the Commission lacks jurisdiction over the contracts which were terminated during the course of this proceeding.

C. Discussion/Findings:

208. The Mobile-Sierra public-interest standard applies to the challenged contracts. The public-interest standard has been characterized as "practically insurmountable,"[582] and can be overcome only in extreme circumstances, such as when the existing terms of the contract "might impair the financial ability of the public utility to continue its service, cast upon other consumers an excessive burden, or be unduly discriminatory."[583] Commission and court precedent clearly establish that "the fact that a contract has become uneconomic to one of the parties does not necessarily render the contract contrary to the public interest."[584] Allegations that contracts may be uneconomic by the passage of time, does not render them unjust and unreasonable nor contrary to the public-interest under the FPA.[585] As Staff points out,

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[582] *Papago*, 723 F.2d at 954.

[583] Id. at 953 (citing 350 U.S. at 355).

[584] *Potomac Elec. Power Co. v. FERC*, 210 F.3d 403, 409 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (citing *Soyland Power Coop. Inc. v. Central Illinois Pub. Serv. Co.*, 51 FERC 61,004, at 61,013 (1990). See also *Sierra*, 350 U.S. at 354-355; *Pontook Operating Ltd. P'ship v. Public Serv. Co. of New Hampshire*, 94 FERC 61,144 at 61,552 (2001); *Public Serv. Co. of New Mexico*, 43 FERC 61,469 at 62,152 (1988); *Gulf States Utils. Co. v. Southern Co. Servs., Inc.*, 43 FERC 61,003 at 61,014 (1988).

[585] *Gulf States Utils. Co.*, 43 FERC 61,003, at 61,016 (1988) (footnote omitted). See also *San Diego Gas & Elec. Co. v. FERC*, 904 F.2d 727 (D.C. Cir. 1990).

there has to be a nexus between the contract and the claimed financial difficulty, burden or discrimination. [586] The Complainants have not offered any evidence to overcome their high burden under the public-interest standard.

The Nevada Companies:

209. The Nevada Companies concede that the prices were at or below prevailing market prices, i.e., the prices were available to all participants in the market.[587] The contracts were all standard products arranged through independent third-party brokers. This evidence does not show any discrimination.

210. The evidence in this case does not show there is an "excessive burden" on consumers. On the contrary, the evidence presented in this case shows that the Nevada Companies' projections assume that they will file for a rate decrease in excess of 20 percent in November 2002 in their base tariff energy rate ("BTER") cases. This is based on their cash flow projections. The Nevada Companies' cash-flow projections further assume that full payment will be made to all Respondents (other than Enron).[588] Even if they are required to pay Enron, any rate increase would be on the order of five percent.[589]

211. Witness Schiffel, testified that the Companies' cash

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[586] Staff IB at 53-54, citing *Metropolitan Edison Co. v. FERC*, 595 F.2d 851, 855 (D.C. Cir. 1979) (financial difficulties could not be traced to the revenue deficit associated with the contract at issue).

[587] Tr. at 2645:14-17; 2656:16-20, 2709:9-15; 2288:3-17; NPC/Calpine Complaint at 19; NPC/MSCG Complaint at 19; NPC/AEP Complaint at 19.

[588] Ex. CES-20.

[589] Tr. at 2545:15-16.

flow projections assume one hundred percent recovery of the power purchase costs (including approximately $60 million of Nevada Power's remaining deferred energy balance and $10-$20 million of SPPC's remaining deferred energy balance). The Companies project rate decreases for both NPC and SPPC of approximately 20 percent (from $52/MWh to $40/MWh for NPC retail electric service effective June 1, 2003; from $51/MWh to $40/MWh for SPPC retail electric service effective August 15, 2003).[590] The Companies' cash-flow projections show positive cash balances for each of the next several years, even assuming dividend payments and scheduled debt repayments.[591] Respondents' assertion that the fact that these Companies project dividend payments indicates a healthy company with a sufficient equity ratio to make such payments is persuasive.[592] The Companies' cash flow projections also indicate that they continue to have adequate access to capital markets. NPC expected to finalize high-yield secured debt totaling $250 in October 2002.[593] NPC expects to issue another $150 million in fully-secured long-term debt in September 2003.[594] The assumptions to the cash flow

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[590] Ex. CES-20 at PP 5, 9-10.

[591] Ex. CES-18, CES-19, CES-20. In an editorial board meeting with a local newspaper, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Nevada Companies publicized their plans to seek a rate decrease. Ex. CES-17 at 1. As the Nevada Companies' Chairman and Chief Executive Officer is quoted as saying, "We believe that we will be able to lower the price of electricity very soon." Ex. CES-17 at 1. "Do I need rate relief, I hope not, I think not," he is quoted as predicting. Ex. CES-17 at 2.

[592] The Nevada Companies' allegations concerning state restructuring issues are not credible. Nevada Companies RB at 36. The restructuring order they cite in the reply brief occurred in April 2001, just two months before the end of the period in question in this case.

[593] Tr. at 2494:1-5 (Schiffel); Ex. CES-20 PP 32-33.

[594] Ex. CES-20 at P 42.

projections also show that SPPC is expected to issue debt in October 2002 ($100 million).[595] Moreover, the Companies have obtained the requisite regulatory approvals for these debt issuances.[596]

212. Further, there is no evidence that Complainants' ability to serve their customers is threatened.[597] The Nevada Companies made general allegations about financial consequences. However, their allegations are not supported by record evidence. [598] Without factual support, these allegations are not credible and are not entitled to any weight. The Nevada Companies failed to adduce any evidence of specific financial distress for the companies or their ratepayers as a result of the contracts at issue in this case. The evidence does show that the Nevada Companies had financial difficulties, even before the contracts at issue in this case were signed. The Nevada Companies' financial

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[595] Ex. CES-20 at P 36.

[596] Ex. CES-20 at P 33.

[597] For instance, a contract for 25 MWS for peak power at Palo Verde, beginning April 1, 2002 through June 30, 2002, represents.009% of NPC's April 2002 net peak load,.007% of NPC's May 2002 net peak load and.006% of NPC's June 2002 net peak load.

[598] For example, witness Schiffel, the Nevada Companies' CFO, testified that the Companies "cannot absorb further losses and remain financially viable." Ex. NPC-8 at 11:16-17. There are no facts supporting this allegation. He also testified that either the Companies' retail customers or their investors and bondholders will bear financial distress without contract modification. Ex. NPC-47 at 22:23-25. Again, he backs up that assertion with no facts. The Nevada Companies witness, Oldham, similarly offers unsupported assertions regarding the consequences of not modifying the contracts. Mr. Oldham testifies that the Companies "likely will go into bankruptcy" if they are unable to recover the costs of the contracts, and that if the contract prices are not modified, it will have a negative impact on the Companies' ability to provide reliable service. Ex. NPC-48 at 16:14-18, 18:3-6 (citing Ex. NPC-8 at 10-18). No facts are provided to support these assertions.

condition was not caused by the contracts at issue in this case.[599] The Nevada Companies' own officers explain that they were in a "precarious" financial position by November 2000, well before the bulk of the challenged contracts were executed.[600] Any additional financial distress suffered by the Nevada Companies stems from the decision of the PUCN in March 2002 to disallow recovery of costs associated with contracts not at issue in this proceeding.[601] The drop in their credit rating to below investment grade occurred only after issuance of the PUCN's order.[602] Thus, their financial distress is not the result of the contracts at issue in this proceeding, especially in light of the fact that they were in dire financial conditions by November 2000. Staff points out that it is plausible that the PUCN may make similar findings with regard to some of the contracts at issue in this case. A further disallowance of imprudence would not meet the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard. However, if the PUCN allows recovery of the costs of these contracts, there would be no financial distress associated with these contracts. Staff's argument is persuasive. The PUCN/BCP argues that its findings should not be considered by this

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[599] Ex. S-1 at 22:1-3.

[600] Ex. NPC-8 at 3:18.

[601] The PUCN found that a significant portion of the Nevada Companies' purchase under the APS (specifically those scheduled for delivery through September 2001) were excessive and based, at least in part on the hope of speculative profits. In 2000-01 these companies realized about $100 million by making off-system sales of excess power, charging $400-500/MWh. Ex. CES-2 at 26-27; Tr. at 2336, 2676. The PUCN found the purchases imprudent and disallowed recovery through the retail rates of the Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific of $437 and $55 million purchased power costs. The PUCN criticized the Companies' failure to enter into long-term contacts to meet their load-serving obligations. Exs. CES-4 at 63 (P 268); Id. at 66 (P 279)'; CES-5 at 214 (P 840).

[602] Ex. CES-2 at 23:7-8.

Commission and views it as tantamount to usurping its authority. However, the PUCN's findings are pertinent to the matter at issue as evidenced by the fact that the Commission took official notice of the decision.[603]

SCWC

213. SCWC did not adduce any evidence of financial hardships either for itself or its ratepayers. SCWC was able to avoid the risk of price volatility and achieve rate certainty as a result of its contracts with Mirant.[604] There is a lack of evidence that SCWC customers will suffer an excessive burden if the SCWC Contract is upheld. In July 2002, SCWC reached a retail rate settlement at the CPUC. The settlement provided for purchased power costs of $77/MWh, so it will be able to pass through to its customers most of the costs of this contract. Under the terms of the settlement, there is no rate increase at all for ratepayers who are permanent residents of SCWC's service territory and use within 130% of a baseline energy allowance established by the CPUC.[605] The other group of residential ratepayers are people with second homes around the two ski areas in SCWC's service territory, and under the terms of the CPUC settlement, this ratepayer class will face an average monthly electric bill of $35.13.[606]

214. The record does not establish that SCWC's ability to continue doing business is, in any way, threatened if the contract is not reformed or that the contract had a negative impact on its financial health or the financial health of its

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[603] 100 FERC 61,273 at 62,047 (2002).

[604] Tr. at 2943-44.

[605] Tr. at 2934:8:16.

[606] Tr. at 2933:22-2934:1; Ex. MAEM-69.

shareholders.[607] The evidence indicates that SCWC's contract with Mirant has not damaged it at all. The contract commenced in April, but SCWC did not need it until May. SCWC bought the power from Mirant at $95/MWh, and sold it back to Mirant at $173/MWh, thus realizing a healthy profit.[608]

215. The price of the SCWC contract seems reasonable, especially in light of the fact that Mirant is a power marketer that had to purchase power in the market in order to resell it to SCWC.[609] Moreover, the Commission recognized that buyers could choose to negotiate rates above the $74/MWh benchmark "to the extent they believe the particular contract or supplier brings value which suits their needs."[610] The record in this case shows that the SCWC Contracts provide significant benefits, including the following benefit that SCWC emphasized before the CPUC; that energy is typically traded in 25-MW blocks, and Mirant took on the risk of supplying SCWC with a 15-MW "odd lot" sale. SCWC recognized in its CPUC testimony that a 15 MW block of energy should carry "a slight pricing premium."[611] A reliable supply of firm energy was particularly important to SCWC since it had no resources of its own. Mirant's contract offered greater capacity-like reliability benefits than a unit-specific contract. A unit-specific contract would have resulted in too much system unreliability for such a small system.[612]

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[607] Tr. at 2937:13-2938:4. See, e.g., Exs. MAEM-70; MAEM-71; MAEM-72; MAEM-74; MAEM-76.

[608] Tr. 2907-08.

[609] Ex. MAEM-16 at 35:1-4.

[610] December 15 Order at 61,995.

[611] Ex. MAEM-30 at JAD-10-11.

[612] Ex. MAEM-30 at JAD-10-11.

216. Even if the just and reasonable standard is applied to SCWC's complaint, SCWC still failed to meet its burden and thus, the preponderance of the evidence favors Respondents. The evidence shows that the price of the contract was based on the market at the time. Dr. Henderson showed that the contract's $95/MWh price compares favorably with forward prices available at the time the contract was entered into. For instance: (i) hedges identified by Mirant; (ii) Mirant's own forward price curves from March 2001; (iii) forward price quotes from TFS Energy; and (iv) NYMEX futures available at the time.[613] Dr. Henderson's finding echoes statements made by SCWC's Mr. Dickson, before the CPUC, where he testified that "based on the market information that existed at the time [SCWC] negotiated the [Mirant] contract... the [Mirant] contract terms are reasonable."[614]

217. Additionally, the evidence shows that SCWC received benefits from the April "buy-back" arrangement that was negotiated between the parties.[615] SCWC concedes that the buy-back benefitted SCWC's ratepayers to the tune of over $600,000.[616] These savings, totaled with SCWC's prior savings of $13.26 million in recent years show that SCWC is a market participant that has largely benefitted from over $14.5 million in savings from 1999 through April 2001, as a result of its forward contracting and marketing strategy.[617] Thus, the preponderance of the evidence weighs

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[613] Ex. MAEM-16 at 25:18-21; MAEM-16 at 27:6-28:15; 28:16-29:9; 29:10- 30:11; 30:12-32:9.

[614] Ex. MAEM-30 at 11:10-11.

[615] Exs. MAEM-2 at 15:17-16:20; SCW-11 at 6:18-22; MAEM-14.

[616] The buy-back was needed due to a change in the contract start date. Ex. SCW-4 at 12.

[617] Ex. SCW-1 at 11:1-14.

in favor of finding that the SCWC contract is just and reasonable.

218. Conversely, record evidence shows that Mirant will be directly harmed if the SCWC Contract is modified. Dr. Henderson testified that Mirant lost a "substantial amount of money" on the SCWC Contract from April 1, 2001 to December 31, 2001.[618] Mirant stands to earn any profit margin at all on the SCWC Contract "only if the [c]ontract price is honored through the term."[619] Moreover, Moody's recently downgraded Mirant's credit rating a second time, specifically citing in its report the "uncertainty as to potential liabilities arising from ongoing government investigations and lawsuits related to California's power markets."[620] Mirant's downgrade: (i) increases its financing costs (ii) hinders its access to capital markets, (iii) forces it to post additional collateral to support its trading and marketing business, and (iv) generally has hampered its' business.[621]

Snohomish

219. Snohomish seeks redress for the length of its contract. Snohomish submitted testimony from six ratepayers who described how rate increases impacted them. However, the rate increase preceded the contract at issue. Under these circumstances, the testimony of the ratepayers is not pertinent to the issue designated in this case (the effects of the Cal ISO and PX spot market prices on forward bilateral markets). The record does not have any evidence regarding the impact of the contract upon ratepayers. Therefore,

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[618] Ex. MAEM-16 at 32:14-16.

[619] Ex. MAEM-16 at 33:19-20; MAEM-16 at 27:6-17.

[620] Ex. MAEM-77.

[621] Tr. at 3336:20-3337:1.

Snohomish failed to meet its burden of proof.[622] As Staff correctly points out, it is significant that this Commission does not have jurisdiction over retail rates and thus, an examination of the impact of the contracts on retail rates may be exceedingly complicated.

220. In the past, Courts ruled that the individual parties' bargaining power is not significant. What is required under Mobile-Sierra is whether the complaining utility can demonstrate that revising the contract is in the public interest.[623] Thus, Snohomish's claims in this regard are without merit. Additionally Snohomish failed to present any evidence of discrimination. Snohomish alleges that the contract is discriminatory because other parties who contracted with Morgan Stanley have other terms. This is not the type of discrimination contemplated by the Mobile-Sierra doctrine. Other terms in other contracts are not relevant to the determination that the contract at issue in this case is discriminatory. In the past, the Mobile-Sierra doctrine has been applied to allegations of discriminatory or preferential treatment to the detriment of other purchasers who are not parties to the contract.[624]

221. Snohomish sold more than one million megawatts-hours in 2001, at an average price of $134/MWh.[625] This produced a net profit of over $17 million in the first five

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[622] See *Potomac Elec. Power Co.*, 210 F. 3d 403 at 409 (D.C. Cir 2000) (PEPCO failed to provide any evidence of undue discrimination or excessive burden, other than the disparity in rates and a bald claim that its ratepayers would derive benefit from a rate modification).

[623] Id.

[624] *Papago Tribal Util. Auth. v. FERC*, 723 F. 2d 950 at 953, n.4 (D.C. Cir 1983) (regarding unduly discriminatory or preferential treatment to the detriment of purchasers who are not parties to the contract).

[625] Tr. at 2405:1-2410:5.

months of 2001.[626] This occurred at the same time it was purchasing power from Morgan Stanley at $105/MWh. Its revenue exceeded expenses by more than $21 million in the year ended December 31, 2001.[627] In 2001, Snohomish resold 1,066,183 MWhs of power that it had purchased in the wholesale market at an average price of $137 per MWh (an 86.4% increase in the volume of resales over the prior year. Snohomish's revenues on power sales in 2001 were $146,285,000 (a 252.1% increase in revenues over the prior year).[628] The contract at issue in this proceeding is no more than five percent of Snohomish's current portfolio costs,[629] with a small impact on rates. The Morgan Stanley/Snohomish contract is only three percent of Snohomish's load and an eight percent increase over existing rates in 2001, while other contracts accounted for an increase of fifty-one percent over existing rates.[630] The record reflects that Snohomish's new power contract with BPA had the most impact on its rates (a forty-six percent increase). Staff argues persuasively, that since the Morgan Stanley deal was less than the $125 placeholder (which was the result of a rate increase) it actually resulted in rate relief.[631]

222. The record demonstrates that the contract prices were

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[626] Tr. 2408-09.

[627] Ex. MSC-132 at 18 (page 4 of 17). An October 1, 2001 rate increase of eighteen percent was attributable to a forty-five percent increase in power costs for power from BPA. Tr. at 1587:20-1588:6; Ex. MSC-111. In April 2002, Snohomish reduced its rates by 5.1 percent. Ex. MSC-160.

[628] Ex. MSC-132 at 31; SNO-27 at 12:19-21; Tr. at 1767:25-1768:11; Tr. at 2406:1-2408:18. Alleged losses in SNO-38 are based on an assumption that any excess power sold came from the long-term contracts. Ex. SNO-4 at 15:7-8; Tr. at 1769:10-15.

[629] Tr. at 1661.

[630] Staff IB at 55; Tr. 1661-62, 1770.

[631] Staff IB at 55; Tr. 1793.

consistent with market prices at the time each contract was executed.[632] The record also shows that these transactions were bona fide arm's-length transactions between knowledgeable companies. In the past, the Commission has enforced the parties' bargains in similar circumstances.[633] Accordingly, it is found that Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof under the Mobile-Sierra doctrine. Even under the just and reasonable standard, the Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof.

223. Some of the transactions at issue in this proceeding were locational swaps or paired transactions. The record shows the Nevada Companies failed to establish that the locational basis swap transactions, i.e., the "paired" transactions, were not just and reasonable. Indeed, the record reflects that this was a practice undertaken by the Nevada Companies to move power to delivery points on the Nevada Companies' system.[634] As explained by Calpine witness Posoli, for example, these locational basis swaps involved simultaneous transactions in which NPC, which apparently had purchased power at Palo Verde, then purchased power from a seller for delivery at Mead, and simultaneously sold the same amount of power to the same counterparty for delivery at Palo Verde.[635] The purpose of entering into these swap transactions is to effectively move power to a desired delivery point without having to secure transmission capacity.[636] NPC could buy power at the liquid Palo Verde

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[632] Ex. MSC-85 at 2:1-3; Tr. at 2645:14-17; Tr. at 2656:16-20, 2709:9-15; Tr. at 2288:3-1; Tr. at 4504-05.

[633] 51 FERC at 61,014-15, citing *Gulf States Utils. Co. v. Southern Co. Servs., Inc.*, 43 FERC 61,003 (1998).

[634] Ex. CES-38.

[635] Ex. CES-1 at 7:3-5.

[636] Ex. CES-1 at 8:10; Ex. CES-1 at 8:8-14.

hub and, through the use of a locational basis swap, effectively transfer to Mead (where it has load-serving obligations) the power it had to sell at Palo Verde.[637] The Nevada Companies presented no evidence that these arrangements were unjust, unreasonable or otherwise improper in any way. Indeed, the record shows that the Nevada Companies' regularly participated in locational basis swaps.[638]

224. Respondents contend that the economic effect of these locational basis swaps should be gauged by focusing on the price differential between the two transactions, rather than on the price of an individual transaction in the pair. This coincides with how the parties enter into the transactions. In arranging each pair of transactions, the parties first would agree upon the "spread," or price differential, between the two delivery points, and then enter each of the two "legs," or individual transactions, that constitute the pair of transactions.[639] As explained by Mr. Posoli, "[a]lthough each pair of the transactions was executed as two separate agreements, in fact each pair is more properly viewed as one overall transaction in which the item being traded is the locational price differential."[640] Thus, rather than focusing on the price for an individual leg of a paired set of transactions; the economic effect to each party to the transactions is reflected in the price differential. Respondents' arguments are persuasive on this point.[641]

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[637] Ex. CES-1 at 8:16-25.

[638] Tr. at 2376:22-2377:10.

[639] Ex. CES-1 at 7:8-13.

[640] Ex. CES-1 at 7:13-15.

[641] In Calpine's case, for example, transactions 2a and 2b have individual prices of $135/MWh for NPC's sale at Palo Verde and $110/MWh for NPC's purchase at Mead. Ex. CES-1 at 4:24-25; Ex. NPC.-13 at 14-17. The differential is $25/MWh. CES-1 at 7:19. The other paired Calpine-

225. NPC is challenging contracts in which Mirant, Reliant and MSCG agreed to sleeve the transaction. A sleeve transaction is a transaction in which a third party enters into contracts with two other parties in order to facilitate a transaction between the two parties.[642] Sleeve transactions are often at a price that was already agreed upon by the original two parties.[643] A sleeve transaction is arranged by a broker, when either of the parties to a transaction decide that it cannot transact with its counter-party.[644] In return for this

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NPC transactions are similar. While the individual transaction prices range from $54/MWh to $250/MWh, the spreads range only from $20/MWh to $45/MWh. Ex. NPC-13 at 9-25; Ex. CES-1 at 7:19-8:5. MSCG's May 22, 2001 transaction is comparable. Exs. MSC-21 at 7; MSC-26; NEV-3 at 49-53. El Paso's basis swap also had a markup of a $2 spread on February 13, 2001. In this set of transactions, SPPC sold to El Paso 50 MW of power at $223/MWh for delivery at Palo Verde for the period July 1, 2002 through September 30, 2002 while on the same day El Paso sold to SPPC 50 MW at $225/MWh for delivery at COB for the same period. Ex. EPME-22 at 20:3-21. These transactions were set for hearing. Mirant's transactions with the Nevada Companies were a package deal. Ex. MAEM-38 at 7:10-8:16. On November 10, 2000, Mirant entered into two 25-MW sales with NPC, one for delivery in the third quarter of 2001, and one for delivery in the third quarter 2002. The Nevada Companies only challenge the latter transaction. Both transactions were priced at $126.50/MWh, the average of both prices [the price for power for delivery in the third quarter of 2001 ($109/MWh) and the price for power for delivery in the third quarter of 2002 ($142/MWh). Ex. MAEM-38 at 8:18-9:16. The two transactions were sold to the Nevada Companies as a package and recorded in two separate confirms at NPC's request. Ex. MAEM-38 at 11:1-16. The Nevada Companies received the benefit of the 2001 transaction. Ex. MAEM-38 at 11:1-16.

[642] Ex. MSC-21 at 5:2-3.

[643] Ex. MAEM-38 at 12:6-11.

[644] For example, a transaction may be "sleeved" if a party's portfolio has a large number of pre-existing obligations with the counter-party, and it is concerned about a lack of sufficient diversification. Ex. MSC-21 at 4:16-19. The third party usually receives a modest fee for acting as an intermediary or "sleeve." Ex. MSC-21 at 5:3-4.

sleeving service, Mirant, Reliant and MSCG received no or minimal fees per megawatt traded.[645] Witness Schaefer testified that it is ironic that NPC is attempting to modify the price in a sleeve transaction. This is so because NPC already had negotiated the transaction price with another third-party seller, and the sleeving Respondents facilitated the transactions by taking on NPC's credit risk.[646] This unrebutted testimony is supported by the record and entitled to substantial weight.

226. This record establishes that sleeves increase market liquidity by facilitating transactions between counterparties that cannot deal directly with each other. Respondents argue that market participants will no longer provide this service if they are subject to contract modification and refunds, particularly if any resulting price adjustment exceeds the sleeving fee (e.g., a $1.00/MWh for the MSCG transactions). It also would be arbitrary and contrary to the FPA to require any Respondent who sleeved on behalf of the Nevada Companies to pay refunds or receive a downward price adjustment for transactions that were a service to the Nevada Companies, particularly when the Respondents cannot seek recovery from the third-party market participant who sold the Respondent power. Respondents' contention that it would be unjust and unreasonable to permit the Nevada Companies to break the second part of the "package transaction" has merit.

227. Pursuant to these findings and based on the findings and discussions in Issues I, II and III above, applicable to

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[645] Ex. MAEM-42; Ex. MAEM-65; Ex. MSC-136; Tr. at 2281:20-2282:4 (Perry); Ex. MSC-21 at 5:6-16, 9:10-20; Ex. MSC-22 at 1; Ex. MSC-35; Ex. MSC-36; Ex. NEV-3 at 29-32; Ex. RES-13; Tr. at 3454:5-9 (Flowers).

[646] Ex. MAEM-38 at 12:19-22.

these transactions, it is found that Complainants failed to establish that the contracts are contrary to the public interest. Moreover, even under the just and reasonable standard, Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof. Accordingly, the contracts should not be modified.

228. Morgan Stanley, Reliant, El Paso and Enron terminated their contracts with the Nevada Companies, arguing that the Nevada Companies failed to satisfy the credit requirements of the WSPPA. As stated above, the Nevada Companies' credit problems arose in part, as a result of two decisions by the PUCN disallowing the recovery by the Nevada Companies of certain costs for power purchases prior to 2001. The March 29, 2002 PUCN Order did not allow the Nevada Companies full cost recovery because it found that it engaged in certain imprudent behavior.[647] As a result of these and other events, on March 28, 2002, Standard & Poor's downgraded certain debt security of the Nevada Companies to a non-investment grade rating.[648]

229. Respondents argue the downgrade triggered the right of counterparties to demand additional credit assurances (e.g., a Letter of Credit, cash, Guarantee Agreement) under Section 27 of the WSPPA. The WSPPA requires the party to provide the requested collateral within three business days of receiving a counterparty's performance request.[649] According to Respondents, the Nevada Companies failed to provide adequate assurance of performance to counterparties requesting such assurance within the contractually-mandated

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[647] CES-2 at 7:3-9:8. The May 29, 2002 Order addressed similar issues with regards to Sierra Pacific.

[648] As the Nevada Companies admit, the credit downgrade did not refer to and was not the result of the contracts that are the subject of the present proceeding. Ex. MSC-144.

[649] WSPPA at § 27. Ex. NPC-14 at 84-88.

period. The failure to provide additional credit assurances constitutes a default under Section 22.1(d) of the WSPPA, triggering a right of termination by the affected counterparty, pursuant to Section 22.2 of the WSPPA. Thus, Morgan Stanley, Enron, Reliant and El Paso terminated their power sales contracts with the Nevada Companies.[650]

230. Staff's arguments are persuasive that the Commission has jurisdiction over the contracts which have been set for hearing and subsequently (apparently) terminated. The cases cited by Respondents are inapposite. Respondents claim that since the physical delivery of energy is no longer contemplated, the contracts are "futures" contracts. However, the contracts at issue in this case do not fit within the Commission's definition of futures contracts, since the contracts were not transacted on an organized exchange and, thus, they are not subject to the terms and conditions of the exchange.[651] Additionally, unlike the cited case, Respondents have not alleged that their contracts were made subject to the jurisdiction of the CFTC. Further, pursuant to Commission precedent, FERC retains jurisdiction over these contracts. For instance, FERC retains jurisdiction over plants in which construction has been cancelled before completion, or the cancellation of deliveries occurred.[652] In so holding, this

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[650] Tr. at 2525:23-2526:11 (Schiffel); Tr. at 4306:13-16 (Price); Ex. EPMI-9 at 6:22-8:9; Ex. MSC-7 at 8:12-15; Tr. at 2484:11-19 (Schiffel); Tr. at 2293:5-9 (Perry); Tr. at 4298:22-4299:16 (Greenshields); Ex. RES-4, RES-5.

[651] *New York Mercantile Exchange*, 74 FERC 61,311 at 61, 984 n.7. (1996). Additionally, claimants have not claimed that the transactions are "risk management transactions," accordingly, 87 FERC 61, 074 (1999) does not apply.

[652] *New England Power Company*, 8 FERC 61, 054 (1979) reh'g denied, 10 FERC 61,279 (1980); aff'd sub nom. *NEPCO Municipal Rate Committee v. FERC*, 668 F. 2d 1327 (D.C. Cir. 1981), cert. denied, 457 U.S. 117 (1982), through Opinion No. 295, *New England Power Company*, 42 FERC 61,016 (1988), reh'g denied in relevant part, 43

finding is not contrary to the Nevada Companies' contention that the termination issue has not been set for hearing. Moreover, it appears this issue would be more pertinent to remedies if it had been deemed the contracts should be modified.

231. As stated above, Complainants have not met their burden of proof under either the public interest or just and reasonable standards.

Issue VI.

Whether Merrill Lynch Capital Services or Allegheny Energy Supply Company, LLC (Allegheny) was a real party in interest in the transactions identified in the Nevada Power Company's complaint against Allegheny?

A. Parties Contentions:

232. Citing Section 14 of the WSPPA, the Nevada Companies argue that Allegheny became the successor in operation to Merrill Lynch since it acquired the wholesale electricity trading business of Merrill Lynch, not merely some contracts or assets.[653] The Nevada Companies argue that various provisions of the purchase agreement prove this.

FERC 61,285 (1988). *Town of Norwood v. FERC*, 80 F.3d 526 at 530 (D.C. Cir. 1996) (owners could recover 100 percent of its unamortized investment, construction-work-in-progress, decommissioning costs, and the operating expenses of a nuclear power plant which shut down before the plant's license expired). *Jersey Central Power & Light Co. v. FERC*, 810 F.2d 1168 at 1170 (1987) (FERC to hold hearing on treatment of $397 million investment in a nuclear generating station which was never completed); *Connecticut Yankee Atomic Power Company*, 95 FERC 61,269 (2000) (Commission asserts jurisdiction over charges for a plant which has not been operational since 1996).

[653] Nevada Companies IB at 48-49.

To wit, the definitions of "Business," and "Energy Commodities;" the third whereas clause and the listing of assets in Section 2.01 of the Asset Contribution and Purchase Agreement ("Purchase Agreement," "Asset Agreement," or "APA"). In addition, the Nevada Companies contend that further evidence of the acquisition is the following: (a) Allegheny purchased all rights under all sales and purchase orders and under all bids and offers solely related to the Business; (b) Merrill Lynch was required to use "reasonable efforts to obtain the consent of the New York Mercantile Exchange to transfer Seats No. 285 and 733 on the Exchange... to Purchasers; (c) Allegheny agreed to offer employment and indeed, hired a number of personnel from Merrill Lynch.[654] Allegheny has repeatedly acknowledged its acquisition in various forums, the Nevada Companies contend.

233. Additionally, the Nevada Companies argue that the transfer to Allegheny pursuant to Section 14 of the WSPPA was to a successor in operation with comparable or higher creditworthiness. [655] Moreover, the Nevada Companies maintain that since they never objected to the transfer of their contracts and proceeded to do business with Allegheny, instead of Merrill, it de facto, consented to the agreement. However, even if consent were deemed to be required, the Nevada Companies argue that they waived such consent.[656] Additionally, the Purchase Agreement along with the Bill of Sale and Assignment constituted an actual assignment of the NPC contract.[657] The Nevada Companies argue that, in one and a half years since entering into the Purchase Agreement,

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[654] *Id.* at 50.

[655] *Id.* at 52.

[656] *Id.* at 53.

[657] *Id.* at 55.

neither Merrill Lynch nor Allegheny made any attempts to obtain consent from the Nevada Companies. This fact, according to the Nevada Companies, evidences that The Nevada Companies' written consent was not necessary. Section 5.05(b) of the Purchase Agreement evidences the fact that all of Merrill's rights under the Nevada Companies' contracts were sold, assigned, transferred, conveyed and delivered to Allegheny and under Section 5.05(c), Allegheny shall fully perform all the obligations under the Nevada Companies contracts.[658]

234. Additionally, the Nevada Companies point out that there are numerous material inconsistencies between Allegheny's position and assertions in this proceeding vis-?-vis prior representations to the Commission.[659] For instance, in the Section 203 application, it was represented that Merrill Lynch would be transferring "all of its rights, title and interest" in the relevant contracts. Yet Allegheny now claims it can reject assignment of any contracts, if it is not in its interest, the Nevada Companies aver. [660] Moreover, Allegheny never informed FERC that it would not be seeking assignment of the NPC contracts.[661] Therefore, the Nevada Companies plead that Allegheny is estopped from making directly contrary representations to the detriment of the Nevada Companies.

235. By virtue of the fact that it has the benefits and obligations under the contracts, pursuant to the Purchase Agreement, the Intermediation Services Agreement, Electric Power Master Agreement and Confirmation Agreement,

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[658] *Id.* at 56.

[659] *Id.* at 58.

[660] *Id.* at 58.

[661] *Id.* at 59.

Allegheny is the real party in interest in this proceeding, the Nevada Companies contend.[662] For instance, payment under the Nevada Companies' contracts flow directly to Allegheny under Section 5.05(b) of the Purchase Agreement. In addition, Section 5.05(b) provides that if an agreement is not assigned, Merrill Lynch shall keep it in effect through "Seller Maintained Agreements" and give Allegheny the benefit of the Seller Maintained agreement to the same extent as if it had been assigned. The Nevada Companies argue that, under Section 2.1.1 of the Intermediation Services Agreement, the parties enter into confirmations under the Electric Power Master Agreement, evidencing hedge transactions concerning any seller maintained agreements that are Structured Contracts and Hedge Contracts.[663] Allegheny's status as a party in interest is further evidence of its obligation to perform under the contracts and because it controls the jurisdictional sale of energy, whereas Merrill merely acts as Allegheny's agent, the Nevada Companies argue.[664]

236. Allegheny contends that the Nevada Companies failed to sue the seller of power as required under section 206 of the Federal Power Act. The Asset Agreement and Intermediation Services Agreement, in conjunction with the parties' actions when implementing these agreements, provide clear evidence that there was neither an assignment of the Nevada Companies contracts nor did Allegheny become the successor-in-operation, pursuant to these agreements.[665] Nevada did not provide evidence that the Nevada Companies contracts at issue were assigned from

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[662] *Id.* at 60.

[663] *Id.* at 60.

[664] *Id.* at 63.

[665] Allegheny IB at 4.

Merrill Lynch to Allegheny, because they were not so assigned.[666] Further, the "Transfer of Interest in Agreement" clause of the WSPP states that assignments require written consent.[667] Therefore, since no written consent from the Nevada Companies exists and since the Nevada Companies never requested assignment, no assignment ever occurred.[668] According to Allegheny, the Intermediation Agreement governs all contracts that were not assigned to Allegheny, and by virtue of this agreement, Allegheny is merely an agent of Merrill Lynch. Moreover, according to Allegheny there are dozens of contracts with twenty counterparties that remain with Merrill Lynch. Additionally, Allegheny asserts that NPC's arguments violate the customary course of dealing in the power industry and if NPC's position prevails, it would lead to a collapse of credit obligations between parties.[669]

237. In addition, pursuant to the Asset Agreement, the Merrill Lynch contract could not be transferred or assigned without counterparty consent.[670] Allegheny avers that their witness Locke McMurray's testimony provides evidence that the parties to the Asset Agreement understood that counterparty consent was a prerequisite to transfer or assignment, that only one contract was actually transferred at closing, and that according to McMurray and witness Kenneth Blasko, attempts at contractual transfers began either May or June of 2001.[671] Further, McMurray testified that prior to any assignment, Merrill Lynch retains

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[666] *Id.* at 4.

[667] *Id.* at 5.

[668] *Id.* at 5.

[669] Allegheny RB at 5.

[670] *Id.*

[671] *Id.* at 5-6.

responsibility for invoicing, position monitoring, creating collateral calls, in addition to retaining its status as the counterparty-obligor, responsible for operational risks incident to the contracts.[672] McMurray also testified that in addition to an actual assignment executed by a tri-party transfer, an assumption agreement, needed to exist, with a termination and release agreement between Merrill Lynch and Allegheny.[673] Moreover, McMurray testified that section 5.05(b) allows Allegheny the option of rejecting any assignment of a contract or transaction if certain terms are deemed unreasonable, while continuing with the intermediated hedge agreement.[674] In addition, under section 5.05(b), McMurray testified that Merrill Lynch was not acting either as an agent or a trustee for Allegheny because the contracts at issue were not Seller-Maintained agreements.[675]

238. The interactions between Merrill Lynch and Allegheny after closing the Asset Agreement were consistent with the conclusion that no assignment occurred.[676] Allegheny avers that the course of performance and the acts and conduct between the parties should be accorded great weight in the interpretation of an agreement.[677] In addition, Allegheny contends that witnesses for Merrill Lynch and Allegheny concurred as to their interpretation of the necessary requirements for contractual assignment, that these requirements were not met in regard to the Nevada Companies contracts, and that Merrill Lynch's inclusion of

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[672] *Id.*

[673] Allegheny IB at 6-7.

[674] *Id.* at 7.

[675] *Id.* at 8.

[676] *Id.* at 9.

[677] *Id.* at 9.

the Nevada Companies contracts on their books is evidence of conduct inconsistent with contractual assignment.[678] Allegheny's witnesses, McMurray and Blasko, also testified that the contracts were not transferred to Allegheny when the parties closed on the Asset Agreement, that such transfers required consent, and that the contracts have not been transferred to date.[679] Allegheny witness, Yair Yaish, explained the logistics of transfers involving counterparties, concluding that since no transfer and assumption agreement had ever been executed, that no assignment took place.[680] Further, Allegheny alleges that after the sale of assets, Merrill Lynch retained its status as seller with respect to the contracts at issue while this entity entered into the hedge contracts with Allegheny, whereby Allegheny would financially benefit from these aforementioned contracts via back-to-back hedge agreements.[681]

239. The parties' course of dealing after closing of the asset agreement is consistent with the conclusion that, pursuant to the WSPP agreement, Allegheny is not the successor in operation to Merrill Lynch.[682] In addition, Nevada has conducted business as though Merrill Lynch were the counterparty, as evidenced by Merrill Lynch's sending invoices to Nevada, who then made payments directly to Merrill Lynch.[683]

240. Allegheny avers that three letters, sent five to six months after filing of the complaint, provide further evidence

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[678] *Id.* at 10.

[679] *Id.* at 11.

[680] *Id.* at 11.

[681] *Id.* at 12.

[682] *Id.*

[683] *Id.*

of such conduct, namely one letter written by the Nevada Companies to Merrill Lynch confirming "to all power suppliers" Sierra Pacific Resources' short-term liquidity plan; a second letter from the Nevada Companies to Merrill Lynch confirming understanding of Merrill Lynch's extension of its right to terminate the WSPP agreement for a short duration; a third letter from Merrill Lynch to the Nevada Companies requesting additional collateral for the swap portfolio between the entities.[684] Allegheny asserts that Nevada did not argue that the former succeeded Merrill Lynch's operations either in their answer to Allegheny's answer to the complaint, in the Nevada Companies' direct case, or in their opposition to Allegheny's motion for summary disposition because the Nevada Companies did not regard Allegheny as the successor-in-operation.[685] Moreover, the recent clarification of the definition of "successor in operation" in the WSPP confirms Allegheny's status is not that of a successor.[686] Further, Allegheny contends that it did not acquire the Nevada Companies through restructuring, Merrill Lynch retained certain contracts, Merrill Lynch remained a power marketer pursuant to the Federal Power Act, and this was an asset sale only.[687]

241. Contrary to the Nevada Companies' allegations, Merrill Lynch's representations in their FERC section 203 application for authorization of transfer of jurisdictional assets does not contradict Allegheny's position that there has been no assignment.[688] In fact, Allegheny avers that their witness, Blasko, explained that, although Merrill Lynch and

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[684] *Id.* at 13-14.

[685] *Id.* at 15.

[686] *Id.* at 15.

[687] *Id.* at 16.

[688] *Id.* at 17.

Allegheny once intended to assign the Nevada contracts after closing on the Asset Agreement, this intention was abandoned when Nevada refused to sign a collateral agreement with Allegheny. Further, Allegheny argues that Nevada's argument that the section 203 application estops Allegheny from denying assignment lacks merit since the Nevada Companies' witness Pierce, agreed that a transfer of assets required consent(s) and approval(s). Further, the application stated that without assignment, Merrill Lynch would remain the counterparty, entering into intermediated trades with Allegheny; the application acted as notice to FERC that none of contracts might be transferred; the application did not state the prerequisites for obtaining counterparty consent for the asset transfers; section 203 does not place any time limit on disposition of assets and finally, a section 203 order allows, but does not mandate disposition of assets.[689]

A. Discussion/Findings:

242. As a consequence of the rulings under the previous issues in this decision, it may be argued that this issue is a moot issue. However, in order to develop the record, a determination under this issue will be made. The mystery of why the Nevada Companies did not sue Merrill Lynch will never be resolved in this case. There is lack of evidence in this regard. However, the evidence does establish that this is a unique case and not one of just "hedges" as Allegheny contends. As a matter of fact, by virtue of the Asset Contribution and Purchase Agreement ("APA") Merrill Lynch and Allegheny created a very distinct relationship. This distinct relationship does in fact, make Allegheny the "owner" of the contracts in this case and thus, the correct Respondent in this case.

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[689] *Id.* at 18-19.

243. Article II of the APA sets forth the purchase and sale of assets as follows:

> Section 2.01 Purchase and Sale of Assets. (a) On the terms and subject to the conditions of this Agreement, MLCS shall, and ML & Co. shall cause MLCS to, sell, assign, transfer, convey and deliver to Rule 58 Company, and Rule 58 Company shall, and Allegheny and Supply shall cause Rule 58 Company to, purchase from MLCS, the following assets and properties of MLCS (such assets being referred to as the "Purchased Assets"):
>
> (i) the Business as a going concern;
>
> (ii) the furniture, fixtures, computers, equipment, machinery and other tangible personal property used by the Transferred Employees in the conduct of the Business and listed on Schedule 2.01(a)(ii) and owned or held by MLCS at the Closing Date; provided that if Sellers cannot deliver any of such assets, Sellers shall pay Purchasers' costs of acquiring such assets as are not delivered, up to an aggregate amount of (XXX);
>
> (iii) the goodwill of MLCS relating solely to the Business;
>
> (iv) rights to the Intellectual Property to the extent provided in the Intellectual Property License;
>
> (v) subject to Section 5.05 and to the extent provided in Section 5.17, (x) all Structured

Contracts, Hedge Contracts, Master Agreements, transactions (whether governed by the Master Agreements or not), contracts and other agreements which expire on or after March 1, 2001 relating to Energy Commodities to be transferred by MLCS to Supply pursuant to this Agreement and listed on Schedule 2.01(a)(v), and any similar transactions or contracts entered into after the date hereof and prior to the Closing and prior to March 1, 2001, and identified in a written notice provided to the Purchasers by the Sellers immediately prior to or on the Closing Date) together with all rights, including the right to receive payment of accounts receivable, arising under such Structured Contracts and existing on the Closing Date, less those transactions or contracts that, prior to the Closing Date, have expired or have been fully performed or duly terminated in accordance with their respective terms (and in accordance with the terms of this Agreement) and (y) all rights of MLCS under all other contracts, licenses, sublicenses, agreements, leases, commitments listed on Schedule 2.01(a)(v) (the terms set forth in clauses (x) and (y) of this Section 2.01(a) (v) being the "Transferred Contracts") together with all rights, including the right to receive payment of accounts receivable, arising under such Transferred Contracts and existing on the Closing Date;

(vi) subject to Section 5.05, all rights of MLCS under all sales and purchase orders and under all bids and offers solely related to the Business and all accounts receivable related to the assets set forth in this clause (vi);

(vii) the memberships in exchanges or clearinghouses or other rights (whether by contract, equity ownership or otherwise) to trade or clear transactions on or through exchanges, clearinghouses, facilities, systems, platforms or other entities (including, but not limited to, electronic trading facilities) that are listed on Schedule 2.01 (a)(vii);

(viii) originals or copies of all books, records, ledgers, files, reports, accounts, data, plans and operating records, whether in hard copy, electronic format, magnetic or other media, which are related to the Business (it being understood that any operating records or accounts that are related to the Business which are included in MLCS's operating records or accounts shall not constitute a Purchased Asset); and

(ix) all claims, causes of action, choses in action, rights of recovery and rights of setoff of any kind (including rights to insurance proceeds and rights under and pursuant to all warranties, representations and guarantees made by suppliers of products, materials, or equipment, or components thereof) related to any of the Purchased Assets described in clauses (i)-(viii) above.

Ex. NPC-57 at 14-16.

244. A simple reading of Section 2 of the APA shows that the going concern, the goodwill, assets, employees, computer software, seats in the New York Mercantile Exchange, power contracts, etc. were transferred by virtue of this agreement. The conclusion to be reached from reading this

section is that it was the intent of the parties at the time of closing to transfer to Allegheny power contracts belonging to Merrill Lynch. This is the relationship between these two parties. Thus, as to Merrill Lynch and Allegheny, the contracts were, in fact, transferred. However, the APA also recognized that third party consents would be necessary for the transfer of some contracts. Allegheny witnesses testified that only one contract was, in fact, transferred at the time of closing. For those contracts requiring third party consents, Section 5.05 of the APA is applicable.

245. Section 5.05 of the APA establishes that if the consent necessary for "Transferred Contracts" is not obtained prior to closing, the Sellers will, subsequent to the closing cooperate with the Purchasers in attempting to obtain such consent. Thus, this section is very significant since it establishes that there are "Transferred Contracts" (as between Merrill Lynch and Allegheny) for which there is missing third party consent. It is for these contracts that Section 5.05(b) was established.

246. Section 5.05(b) of the APA, establishes that after the closing Allegheny could not object to consents with unreasonable terms and the Sellers would use commercially reasonable efforts to obtain consent. If any Transferred Contract cannot be transferred without consent or waiver, then the APA would not constitute an assignment or transfer of such contracts. Moreover, if any consents for any agreement were not obtained prior to closing (and thus, the agreement has not been assigned) the Seller shall keep such agreements in effect ("Seller-Maintained Agreements") and give Purchaser the benefit of such agreements as if they had been assigned. The specific language provides:

> If any consent for any agreement is not obtained and such agreement shall not be assigned,

> transferred, leased, subleased, licensed or sublicensed, the Sellers shall, to the extent possible without incurring any liability to any third party for which the Purchasers have not agreed to reimburse the Sellers, keep the agreement in effect (such agreements kept in effect are referred to herein as the "Seller Maintained Agreements") and to the extent reasonably possible give the Purchasers the benefit without limitation: (i) cooperating with the Purchasers in holding any rights under agreements for which no consent to assign rights to Purchaser is obtained ("Non-Assignable Rights") in trust for the Purchasers or acting as agent for the Purchasers; (ii) enforcing any rights of the Sellers arising from such Non-Assignable Rights against the issuers thereof or the other party or parties thereto; (iii) taking all such actions and doing, or causing to be done, all such things at the request of the Purchasers as shall be reasonably necessary and proper in order that the value of any Non-Assignable Rights shall be preserved and shall inure to the benefit of Purchasers; and (iv) paying over to the Purchase[r]s all monies or other assets collected by or paid to the Sellers in respect of such Non-Assignable Rights.

Ex. NPC-57 at 40.

247. Pursuant to the APA, the rights to the non-transferred contracts passed from Merrill Lynch to Allegheny, and it is these rights that govern the contracts at issue. Thus, Allegheny is correct, that third party consents have not been obtained for some Transferred Contracts. However, Allegheny is not correct in contending that Section 5.05(b) does not apply to these contracts. Expressed in other terms,

the finding in this case is that for those Transferred Contracts which did not have third party consents, and thus, the transfers have not been consummated de facto, section 5.05(b) applies. The express language of Section 5.05(b) states that Merrill Lynch became a trustee of Allegheny, who took on the role of beneficiary of the non-transferred contracts. This caveat makes the relationship between the parties unique, without which the ruling would have been different. Therefore, Allegheny is the principal in this relationship. Consequently, Allegheny is the correct Respondent in this case.

248. Nothing in the Intermediation Services Agreement ("ISA") contradicts this finding. As a matter of fact, the ISA supports this finding. Allegheny's assertions will be given substantial weight in that the ISA is applicable to this situation. The ISA provides that the service is for "... hedge transactions ("Pass-Through Transactions") in respect of (a) Seller-Maintained Agreements that are Structured Contracts and Hedge Contracts (each an "Existing Intermediation Transaction") and (b) Future Intermediation Transactions."[690] Additionally, under the ISA, Allegheny held Merrill Lynch harmless in connection with Existing Intermediation Transactions.[691] This agreement provides that Sellers (Merrill Lynch) shall not have liabilities to Allegheny unless and to the extent that, Merrill Lynch actually receives corresponding and equal payment or delivery from Client. Finally, this agreement also provides that Merrill Lynch's relationship to the Purchasers is that of an "[i]ndependent contractor only."[692] Therefore, Allegheny's argument that, under this agreement, it is merely an agent of Merrill Lynch

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[690] Ex. NPC-57 ISA, Section 2.1.

[691] Ex. NPC-57 ISA, Section 6.1.

[692] Ex. NPC-57 ISA, Section 8.3.

is meritless. The relationship as described, is more than Allegheny merely acting as an agent of Merrill Lynch.

249. Witness White testified that by the terms of the Asset Agreement, specifically section 5.05(b) of the Asset Agreement, Merrill Lynch became an agent of Allegheny, who took on the role of principal in regard to the non-transferred contracts. [693] This testimony is entitled to substantial weight. Allegheny contends that Section 5.05(b) does not apply since the contracts at issue are not Seller-Maintained Agreements, while conceding that "the term 'Seller-Maintained Agreement may have been used differently in the Intermediation Services Agreement[.]"[694] (emphasis added). However, as witness White points out, the term is not merely used differently in the Intermediation Services Agreement, but is, in fact, used to cover "[s]tructured contracts and [h]edge contracts," and not simply "licensing agreements or software or equipment contracts." Ex. NPC-55 at 12:23-13-6. Moreover, the evidence does not support Allegheny's conclusory allegations that the contracts at issue are not Seller-Maintained Agreements. In the absence of other evidence, reliance upon the plain language of the Asset Agreement and related documents is appropriate.

250. Although interesting, the argument that a successor-in-operation relationship existed between Merrill Lynch and Allegheny is unpersuasive. Section 14 of the Western Systems Power Pool covering a "Transfer of Interest in Agreement states:

> No party shall voluntarily transfer its membership under this Agreement without the

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[693] Ex. NPC-55 at 12: 4-10.

[694] See Allegheny RB at 3, fn 2.

> written consent and approval of all other Parties except to a successor in operation of the applicable properties of such Party. With regard to the transfer of the rights and obligations of any Party associated with transactions under the Service Schedules, neither Party may assign such rights or obligations unless a) the other Party provides its prior written consent which shall not be unreasonably withheld; or b) the assignment is to a successor in operation whose creditworthiness is comparable to or higher than that of the assigning Party.[695]

251. Witness White testified that pursuant to the Western Systems Power Pool Agreement, the term "successor-in-operation" is currently defined as:

> The successor entity which takes over the trading operations of the first entity either through a merger or restructuring. A Successor in Operation shall not include an entity which merely acquires power sales contracts from the first entity either through a purchase or by other means without taking over the wholesale electric trading operations of the first entity. NPC-55 at 16:2-9 (emphasis added).

252. However unique the relationship between Merrill Lynch and Allegheny may be, the terms and conditions, as set forth in the Asset Contribution and Purchase Agreement, the Intermediation Services Agreement, Electric Power Master Agreement, ISDA Master Agreement do not support the finding that there was a merger or restructuring. Therefore, Allegheny is not the successor-in-operation to

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[695] Ex. NPC-14 at 51-52.

Merrill Lynch. Allegheny established that Merrill Lynch continued its trading operations on a reduced basis.

253. Nevada Power's contention that written consent was not a prerequisite to assignment because the Purchase Agreement in conjunction with the Bill of Sale and Assignment effectively created an assignment of the contracts at issue is not persuasive, as to third parties. As discussed above, under Section 14 of the WSPPA, consent from third parties is required before an assignment of a transaction can take place. However, it bears mention that Section 5.05(b) of the APA allows waiver of consent. To wit, the section states "without the consent or waiver of... third party." Nevada Power alleges it waived the consent requirement. By virtue of the findings above, the waiver or the Section 14 consent issue need not be reached.

254. Witness White persuasively testified that the Bill of Sale and APA effectively created an assignment of the contracts at issue. This testimony is found persuasive as to the relationship between Merrill Lynch and Allegheny. Furthermore, the following testimony from this witness is found persuasive: "my understanding is, I assume if I were Merrill Lynch I would like to be released from my liability under these [contracts] by the counterparties. If I assign the contract to a third party to Allegheny, I'm not released, I still have liability, as I answered you before."[696]

255. Additionally, witness White testified that "they [Allegheny] could have decided not to pursue negotiations with the counterparties that would have the effect of releasing Merrill Lynch from liability in effect as a guarantor of Allegheny's performance."[697] The wording of the Transfer

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[696] Tr. at 3068:3-12.

[697] Tr. at 3068: 23-29 and Tr. at 3069:1 (emphasis added).

and Assumption Agreement in conjunction with the APA supports this, finding that the reason behind the requirement is to release Merrill Lynch from liability.

256. Nevada Power also contends[698] that, pursuant to Commission precedent, a party with a financial stake in the outcome of a case suffices to make it a real party in interest. However, Allegheny maintains that the cases cited by Nevada Power are distinguisable from the facts in this proceeding, and are therefore, inapplicable. The cases cited[699] are persuasive in terms of supporting arguments for intervention ab initio. However, this issue is not the issue in this case. Since the issue in this case is whether Allegheny is the appropriate respondent in this proceeding, the cases are inapposite. Accordingly, the findings under this issue are based on the actual terms and conditions of the Asset Agreement itself which defines the relationship created between Nevada Power and Allegheny, as discussed above. Interpretation of this and the other agreements between these entities leads to the finding that Allegheny is the correct Respondent in this proceeding.

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[698] Nevada Power Company also alleges that Allegheny made inconsistent representations to FERC, and as a result, is now estopped from arguing that the contracts at issue have not been assigned. NPC IB at 59 citing *New Hampshire v. Maine*, 532 U.S. 742 (2001). It is found that Allegheny did not make inconsistent representations to FERC, thus the estoppel doctrine is not applicable.

[699] *United Gas Pipe Line Company*, 20 FERC 63,050 (1982); *El Paso Natural Gas Company*, 40 FERC 63,047 (1987); *Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, et al.*, 22 FERC 61,146 (1983); *Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation*, 50 FPC 1419 (1973); *Pan American Petroleum Corporation, et al.*, 29 FPC 1216 (1963); *Philco Corporation v. FCC*, 257 F.2d 656 at 658 (D.C. Cir. 1958); *In re Michael O'Dell and Linda O'Dell*, 268 BR 607 at 615 (N.D. Ala. 2001).

CONCLUSION

257. As stated above, it is concluded that the Mobile-Sierra public interest standard is the applicable standard for use in this case. It is further concluded that under the public interest standard, Complainants failed to prove that the Cal ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected the long-term bilateral markets. As a result, it is concluded that the contracts at issue in this case should not be modified. Therefore, it is concluded that the complaints should be dismissed. Additionally, it is concluded that Allegheny was the proper Respondent in the Nevada Power proceeding.

258. WHEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED, subject to review by the Commission on appeal or on its own motion as provided in the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, that the complaints filed by the Nevada Companies, Sierra Pacific, Southern California Water Company and Snohomish be dismissed.

APPENDIX C

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Commission Opinions, Orders and Notices

Before Commissioners: Pat Wood, III, Chairman; William L. Massey, and Nora Mead Brownell.

Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company
v.
Enron Power Marketing, Inc.
El Paso Merchant Energy
American Electric Power Services, Corp.
Nevada Power Company
v.
Morgan Stanley Capital Group
Calpine Energy Services
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.
Reliant Energy Services
BP Energy Company
Allegheny Energy Supply Company, L.L.C.
Southern California Water Company
v.
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.
Public Utility District No. 1 Snohomish County, Washington
v.
Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc.

Docket Nos. EL02-28-000
EL02-28-002
EL02-33-000
EL02-33-002
EL02-38-000
EL02-38-002

Docket Nos. EL02-29-000
EL02-29-002
EL02-30-000
EL02-30-002
EL02-31-000
EL02-31-002
EL02-32-000
EL02-32-002
EL02-34-000
EL02-34-002
EL02-39-000
EL02-39-002

Docket Nos. EL02-43-000
EL02-43-002

Docket Nos. EL02-56-000
EL02-56-002
(Consolidated)

ORDER ON INITIAL DECISION, REHEARING REQUESTS, AND MOTIONS

(Issued June 26, 2003)

1. This case is before the Commission on exceptions to an Initial Decision [1] issued in this proceeding. This proceeding addresses complaints filed by Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company (Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific or collectively, Nevada Companies), Southern California Water Company (SCWC), and Public Utility District No. 1 Snohomish County, Washington (Snohomish). The complaints allege that

[1] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 101 FERC ¶ 63,031 (2002) (Initial Decision).

dysfunctions in the California electricity spot markets caused forward contracts negotiated in the bilateral markets in California, Washington and Nevada, and entered into pursuant to the Western Systems Power Pool (WSPP) Agreement during the period November 1, 2000 through June 20, 2001, to be unjust and unreasonable. The complaints seek a remedy of contract modification.

2. In the order issued on April 11, 2002, [2] the Commission set the instant complaints for hearing. After an evidentiary hearing, the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) concluded that the applicable standard of review intended by the parties for the contracts at issue here is the "public interest" standard[3] and that the Complainants have failed to meet their burden under this standard of review.

3. In this order, we affirm the ALJ's decision denying the complaints for the reasons stated below. In denying the instant complaints, we took into consideration the evidentiary record developed in this proceeding, findings of the Commission Staff's Final Report on Price Manipulation in Western Markets in Docket No. PA02-2-000 (Staff Report), and evidence submitted in the 100- Day Discovery Proceeding in Docket No. EL00-95, et al.[4]

4. Specifically, we affirm the ALJ's findings that the

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[2] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 99 FERC ¶ 61,047, order on reh'g, 100 FERC ¶ 61,273 (2002), reh'g pending. (April 11 Order).

[3] See *United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Serv. Corp.*, 350 U.S. 332 (1956) (Mobile); *FPC v. Sierra Pacific Power*, 350 U.S. 348 (1956) (Sierra); and *United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Memphis Light, Gas and Water Div.*, 358 U.S. 103 (1958).

[4] *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. Sellers of Energy and Ancillary Serv.*, 101 FERC ¶ 61,186 (2002), order on clarification and reh'g, 102 FERC ¶ 61,164 (2003).

applicable standard of review for the contracts at issue here is the "public interest" standard and that the Complainants have failed to meet their burden of proof under this standard of review.

5. Before discussing the specific facts of the case before us, it is important to understand the historical context in which the "public interest" standard has been applied by the courts, and the legal parameters within which the Commission must address requests for contract reformation. The "public interest" standard of review was first introduced by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1956 Mobile case[5] and the concurrently decided Sierra case.[6] The U.S. Supreme Court held that, in order to justify modification of its contract, the seller in that case had to show that the contract rate was so low that it was contrary to the public interest. In the Mobile and Sierra decisions, the Court sought to mesh the respect for the sanctity of contracts under the Federal Power Act (FPA)[7] and Natural Gas Act[8] with the traditional scheme of regulation under those statutes. The Court held that, where the utility and its customer contracted for a particular rate and did not reserve for the seller the right to unilaterally propose a rate change, the utility cannot unilaterally (i.e., without the customer's consent) file a new rate under section 205 of the FPA[9] to supersede the agreed-upon rate. The Court also ruled that the Commission's power under Section 206 of the FPA[10] to alter the existing contract rate, after its

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[5] *United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Serv. Corp.*, 350 U.S. 332 (1956).

[6] See *FPC v. Sierra Pacific Power*, 350 U.S. 348 (1956).

[7] 16 U.S.C. §§ 796 et seq. (2000).

[8] 15 U.S.C. §§ 717 et seq. (2000).

[9] 16 U.S.C. § 824d (2000).

[10] 16 U.S.C. § 824e (2000).

acceptance by the Commission, is limited.[11]

6. In the Sierra decision, the Court gave examples of factors that would meet the "public interest" standard and allow the selling utility to modify its contract. The selling utility was required to demonstrate that "the rate is so low as to adversely affect the public interest -- as where it might impair the financial ability of a public utility to continue service, cast upon other [customers] an excessive burden, or be unduly discriminatory."[12]

7. Both Mobile and Sierra addressed seller challenges to contract rates alleged to be too low. In later cases, the Mobile-Sierra doctrine was applied to contracts containing rates that allegedly were too high.[13] The Mobile and Sierra cases were decided in a cost-based rate regime and consequently dealt with changes proposed to contracts that were already on file with the Commission. The application of the Mobile-Sierra doctrine was later extended to contracts that were not on file with the Commission.[14]

8. In a more recent case involving a long-term, fixed-rate contract, the court held that a showing of "a mere rate disparity or a benefit to the purchasing utility or its customers for a rate modification does not suffice, without more, to satisfy [the 'public interest'] standard."[15] In PEPCO,

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[11] *Boston Edison Co. v. FERC*, 233 F.3d 60, 64-65 (2000) (citing *Sierra*, 350 U.S. at 352-55; accord *Mobile*, 350 U.S. at 347).

[12] See *Sierra* at 355.

[13] See e.g., Public Service Commission of the State of New York v. FPC, 543 F.2d 757, 798 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

[14] See e.g., Public Service Commission of the State of New York v. FPC, 543 F.2d 757, 798 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

[15] See *Potomac Electric Power Company v. FERC*, 210 F.3d 403, 404 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

the court also noted that the purchaser seeking a lower rate failed to "offer any evidence (beyond speculation) that the only potential non-parties here, its ratepayers, were adversely affected by the existing rates; it did not, for example, even attempt to show how much if any of the rate disparity was passed on to PEPCO ratepayers rather than borne by the utility itself."[16] While PEPCO claimed an excessive burden on its customers and discriminatory impact from the disparity between the contract rates and the OATT rate charged by the same transmission provider, the court said that "other than pointing out that the contract rate is twice [Allegheny's] OATT rate, [PEPCO] has presented no evidence regarding how the contract rates are unduly discriminatory or excessively burdensome on PEPCO ratepayers."[17] The court noted the Commission's precedent which holds that "the fact that a contract has become uneconomic to one of the parties does not necessarily render the contract contrary to the public interest."[18]

9. Based on our review of the evidence and the totality of circumstances, we conclude that the Complainants have failed to meet their burden of proof under the "public interest" standard, as defined in past cases. We find that the

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[16] *Id.* at 408.

[17] *Id.* at 409.

[18] See e.g., *Gulf States Utilities Company v. Southern Company Services, Inc.*, et al., Opinion No. 300, 43 FERC ¶ 61,003, at 61,016, *reh'g denied*, Opinion No. 300-A, 43 FERC ¶ 61,394 (1988), *aff'd sub nom. Gulf States Utilities Company v. FERC*, 886 F.2d 442 (1989); accord *Soyland Power Cooperative, Inc. v. Central Illinois Public Service Company*, 51 FERC ¶ 61,004, at 61,014-15, *reh'g dismissed as moot*, 52 FERC ¶ 61,149 (1990); *Public Service Company of New Mexico*, 43 FERC ¶ 61,469, at 62,152, *reh'g denied*, 45 FERC ¶ 61,034 (1988), *aff'd sub nom. San Diego Gas & Electric Company v. FERC*, 904 F.2d 727 (D.C. Cir. 1990).

challenged contracts are not contrary to the public interest because the Complainants have failed to demonstrate that the contracts in question caused financial distress for the Complainants so as to threaten their ability to continue service, that the contracts cast an excessive burden on their customers, that the contracts were unduly discriminatory to the detriment of other customers that are not parties to this proceeding, or that any other factors on this record demonstrate that the contracts are contrary to the public interest. At the time of contract execution, other alternatives were available to the Complainants; however, they chose to enter into the contracts in question, accepting market risks. Complainants benefitted from resales of the energy purchased under these contracts during the relevant period; however, after the drop in prices in mid-2001, Complainants became dissatisfied with their bargains and sought contract modification. The law is quite clear on that point. The fact that a contract becomes uneconomic over time does not render it contrary to the public interest. We, therefore, deny the instant complaints.

10. In addition, we deny requests for rehearing of an order on rehearing, as discussed below. We also address certain procedural motions filed by Snohomish and SCWC.

11. This order is in the public interest because it balances effective rate regulation with respect for the sanctity of contracts, as dictated by the U.S. Supreme Court under the Mobile-Sierra doctrine.

I. Background

12. On July 26, 2000, the Commission issued an order initiating an investigation of the conditions of bulk power

markets in various regions of the country.[19] On August 2, 2000, San Diego Gas & Electric Company filed a complaint, requesting that the Commission impose a $250 price cap for sales into the California Independent System Operator (ISO) and Power Exchange (PX) spot markets. The Commission denied the request in an order issued on August 23, 2000.[20] In that order, the Commission instituted hearing procedures to investigate the justness and reasonableness of the rates of public utility sellers into the California ISO and PX markets. The hearing was held in abeyance pending completion of the Commission Staff fact-finding investigation of the conditions of bulk power markets, which was completed in October 2000.

13. On November 1, 2000, the Commission issued an order proposing measures to address the dysfunctions in the California market and remedy the problems identified by the Staff investigation.[21] The Commission specifically identified the following rules and regulatory policies as flawed: the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) requirement that the three California Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) buy and sell all their energy needs through the PX; the CPUC restrictions on the IOUs' ability to contract forward; the lack of retail demand responsiveness; and underscheduling due to the ISO's replacement reserves policies.[22] To correct the above identified market design problems, the Commission proposed, among other things, elimination of the requirement that the California IOUs sell all their generation into and buy all their requirements from the PX.

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[19] Order Directing Staff Investigation, 92 FERC ¶ 61,160 (2000).

[20] San Diego Gas & Electric Co., 92 FERC ¶ 61,172 (2000).

[21] San Diego Gas & Electric Co., 93 FERC ¶ 61,121 (2000).

[22] *Id.* at 61,354-5.

14. On December 15, 2000, the Commission issued an order[23] adopting, among other things, a benchmark price to provide guidance for assessing the prices of long-term electric supply contracts;[24] and market monitoring and price mitigation for the ISO and PX spot markets, including a $150 per MW price breakpoint.

15. Subsequent orders issued on April 26, 2001[25] and June 19, 2001[26] adopted further market monitoring and mitigation measures for the California markets, and extended those measures to all Western markets.

16. To put the contracts at issue in this case in context, the Nevada Companies' contracts were executed between November 2000 to June 2001; the Snohomish contract was executed on January 26, 2001; and the SCWC contract was executed on March 19, 2001. During the relevant period the Complainants entered into a large number of contracts for purchase as well as for sale of energy; however, out of all these contracts the Complainants seek to modify only a relatively small number of contracts included in the instant complaints.

17. In December 2001, Nevada Companies filed separate complaints against the following entities: Duke Energy Trading and Marketing, L.L.C. (Duke), Morgan Stanley

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[23] San Diego Gas and Electric v. Sellers of Energy, 93 FERC ¶ 61,294 (2000).

[24] The benchmark for five year contracts for supply around-the-clock was set at $74/MWh. Id. at 61,994.

[25] San Diego Gas & Electric Co., 95 FERC ¶ 61,115 (2001) (April 26 Order).

[26] San Diego Gas & Electric Co., 95 FERC ¶ 61,418 (2001) (June 19 Order).

Capital Group Inc. (Morgan Stanley), Calpine Energy Services, L.P. (Calpine), Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P. (Mirant), Reliant Energy Services, Inc. (Reliant), El Paso Merchant Energy, L.P. (El Paso), BP Energy Company (BP), American Electric Power Service Corporation (AEP), Enron Power Marketing Inc. (Enron), and Allegheny Energy Supply Company, L.L.C. (Allegheny). SCWC filed a complaint against Mirant. In February 2002, Snohomish filed a complaint against Morgan Stanley. The Nevada Companies and SCWC argued that the dysfunctions in the ISO and PX spot markets caused long-term contracts negotiated in California, Washington, and Nevada to be unjust and unreasonable and, consequently, requested modification of their contracts. Snohomish argued that the term of its contract and the Collateral Annex[27] are unjust and unreasonable. Unlike Nevada Companies and SCWC, Snohomish requested modification of the contract term, not the contract rate.

18. On January 10, 2002, Nevada Companies filed a notice of withdrawal with prejudice of complaint against Duke, explaining that Nevada Companies and Duke reached an agreement to modify their contracts, effective June 4, 2002.

19. On April 11, 2002, the Commission issued an order setting the instant complaints for a trial-type evidentiary hearing. In the April 11 Order, the Commission instructed the ALJ to examine the following issues: (1) whether the challenged contracts should be reviewed under the "just and reasonable" standard or the more stringent "public interest"

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[27] The Collateral Annex sets forth the conditions under which Snohomish is required to provide collateral, as well as the conditions under which Morgan Stanley will release such collateral.

standard of review; and (2) whether the dysfunctional California ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected Western long-term bilateral markets, and if so, whether contract modification is warranted.

20. The hearing on these issues was held from October 7-24, 2002. The Initial Decision was issued on December 19, 2002. In the Initial Decision, the ALJ found that the Mobile-Sierra "public interest" standard of review applies to the contracts at issue. Furthermore, the ALJ concluded that Complainants failed to satisfy their burden of proof to justify contract modification under the "public interest" standard. The following parties filed briefs on and opposing exceptions to the Initial Decision: Nevada Companies, Snohomish, SCWC, the Commission's Trial Staff (Staff), Mirant, Morgan Stanley, Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN), Allegheny, Enron, AEP, BP, Calpine, El Paso, and Reliant.

21. On November 20, 2002, the Commission issued an order allowing parties in the Docket No. EL00-95, et al. proceeding to adduce evidence that was either indicative or counter-indicative of market manipulation that may have occurred during the California energy crisis of 2000-2001 (100-Day Discovery Proceeding).[28] The submission of evidence in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding was completed on March 20, 2003.

22. On March 26, 2003, the Commission released the Staff Report. The Staff Report, among other things, asserted that many spot market trading strategies undertaken by certain sellers were in violation of anti-gaming provisions of the Commission-approved tariffs for the California ISO and PX. Upon Staff's recommendation, the Commission issued

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[28] See supra n.4.

certain "show cause" orders requiring the named market participants to respond to market manipulation allegations of the Staff Report. Additionally, the Staff Report addressed the issue of whether the dysfunctional spot market had an impact on the forward prices reflected in long-term power supply contracts. The Staff Report analysis found that spot prices influenced forward prices negotiated during the January 1, 2000 through June 21, 2001 crisis period and that the influence was the greatest for contracts with one to two years terms.

23. Subsequent to release of the Staff Report, Complainants requested an opportunity to have oral argument before the full Commission. On April 14, 2003, the Commission granted this request. The oral argument took place on April 23, 2003.

II. Issues for Discussion

1. Applicable Standard of Review

24. In the April 11 Order, the Commission set for hearing the issue of whether the applicable standard of review for the Complainants to prevail is that a challenged contract was contrary to the public interest, or that the contract was not just and reasonable. The Commission determined that for all but one of the contracts at issue here, Section 6.1 of the umbrella WSPP Agreement [29] was the only specific contractual provision which may affect parties' rights to make changes to contracts entered into under the WSPP

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[29] Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement states in part as follows: "Nothing contained herein shall be construed as affecting in any way the rights of the Parties to jointly make application to FERC for a change in the rates and charges, classification, service, terms, or conditions affecting WSPP transactions under Section 205 of the Federal Power Act and pursuant to FERC rules and regulations promulgated thereunder..."

Agreement. The Commission noted that this provision addressed sellers' rights under Section 205 of the FPA, not buyers' FPA Section 206 rights, to modify rates affecting transactions under the WSPP Agreement.

25. In the April 11 Order, the Commission also determined that one of the contracts at issue, specifically the contract between Snohomish and Morgan Stanley, includes a separate provision, not contained in the umbrella WSPP Agreement, which addresses both FPA Section 205 rights and FPA Section 206 rights.[30] Initially, the issue of the applicable standard of review for this contract was also set for hearing. On rehearing, however, the Commission ruled that Snohomish must satisfy the "public interest" standard to justify modification of its contract with Morgan Stanley.[31] Snohomish requests rehearing of that determination.

26. Also, on rehearing, the Commission specified that the evidentiary hearing was established to interpret Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement and to ascertain the intent of the parties at the time the contracts in question were signed.[32]

A. Initial Decision

27. The ALJ ruled that the applicable standard of review for the instant complaints is the "public interest" standard. In

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[30] Section 39B of the Confirmation Agreement between Snohomish and Morgan Stanley states: "The rates for service specified in this Agreement shall remain in effect for the term of this Agreement and shall not be subject to change through application to FERC pursuant to the provisions of Section 205 or 206 of the Federal Power Act."

[31] See *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,273, at 62,047-48 (2002), *reh'g pending* (Rehearing Order).

[32] *Id.* at 62,047.

particular, the ALJ found that each contract at issue consists of a Confirmation Agreement, the WSPP Agreement and any amendments, which together form a single, integrated document.[33] The ALJ also found that Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement allows parties to jointly seek modification of the rates, terms and conditions of the contracts under Section 205 of the FPA; however, the cited section does not have any language regarding the parties' FPA Section 206 rights.[34] Accordingly, the ALJ concluded that pursuant to court and Commission precedent,[35] in the absence of clear contractual language allowing unilateral contract modifications under Section 206, Complainants must meet the "public interest" standard of review.[36]

28. In addition, the ALJ found that nothing in Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement, nor in the underlying Confirmation Agreements, suggests that the contracting parties intended to give unilateral authority to modify the contracts under Section 206 of the FPA. The drafters of the WSPP Agreement have envisioned a possibility of a joint application to the Commission to change rates, terms and conditions of the WSPP Agreement and transactions entered into thereunder pursuant to Section 205 of the FPA and they could easily have added language to allow other ways of making changes to the WSPP Agreement. Thus, the ALJ

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[33] The ALJ relied on Sections 2.2, 26 and 35 of the WSPP Agreement. See Initial Decision at 65,274.

[34] *Id.*

[35] The ALJ cited to *Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F. 3d 1091, 1096 (D.C. Cir. 1998); *Boston Edison Company v. FERC*, 233 F.3d 60 (1st Cir. 2000); *San Diego Gas & Electric Company v. Public Service Company of New Mexico*, 91 FERC ¶ 61,233 at 61,851 (2000); and *Metropolitan Co. v. FERC*, 595 F.2d 851, 855 (D.C. Cir. 1979). Id. at 65,275.

[36] *Id.*

concluded that the only rational interpretation of Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement would be that it precluded unilateral contract modification.[37]

29. The ALJ also considered the parties' intent at the time the contracts were signed. It was found that the evidence submitted in this case did not support Complainants' allegations concerning intent and that Complainants' witnesses' testimony in this regard was not credible.[38] The ALJ also found that substantial evidence supports Respondents' arguments concerning this issue. In particular, Respondents provided corroborated evidence that the parties' Section 206 rights were never a subject for consideration during negotiations.[39]

30. Furthermore, the ALJ disagreed with the Complainants' contention that the Mobile-Sierra doctrine does not apply to the facts at issue here. The ALJ determined that the Mobile-Sierra doctrine does not distinguish contracts based on the length of the contracts, whether the rates are low or high, or whether the complaint is filed by the buyer or the seller.[40] It was also found that the Commission had not prejudged the issue of the applicable standard of review when the Commission suggested that market participants could file complaints if they believed that their contracts are unjust and unreasonable.[41] The ALJ also dismissed PUCN's argument that the Commission should apply here a more flexible "public interest" standard.[42]

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[37] *Id.* at 65,276.

[38] *Id.* 65,276-77.

[39] *Id.* at 65,277.

[40] *Id.*

[41] *Id.*

[42] *Id.*

B. Exceptions

31. Complainants and PUCN assert as error the ALJ's determination that the "public interest" standard applies to the contracts at issue. Complainants argue that the Commission may apply the "public interest" standard only if it first finds the contract prices to be just and reasonable. They state that because the contracts at issue were market-based rate contracts, they were never filed with or approved by the Commission. As such, it is claimed, these contracts were never intended to be regarded as inviolable, since the Commission is required, in these cases, to monitor and, if necessary, ensure that the markets in which these contracts are performed, continue to function in a manner that will support or justify a continuation of market-based pricing.

32. In response, Respondents and Staff state that the ALJ correctly found that an initial review of the challenged contracts has already occurred under Section 205 when the Commission approved the WSPP Agreement, and after further proceedings, found that all Respondents are authorized to sell power at market-based rates and that they did not possess the ability to exercise market power. Staff adds that by virtue of the granted market-based rate authority, the rates, terms and conditions Respondents negotiate are deemed to be just and reasonable. Staff argues that inasmuch as the rates, terms and conditions included within the Confirmation Agreements are presumed to be just and reasonable, any need for prior Commission approval has been met. To that end, Mirant further asserts that the Commission previously has held that, in the case of market-based rates, the "just and reasonable" standard of Section 205 is satisfied by the Commission's determination, prior to the effectiveness of those rates, that the utility and its affiliates lack market power or have taken steps to mitigate market

power. Moreover, Respondents and Staff state that parties to whom the Commission has granted market-based rate authority file contracts for informational purposes only. Therefore, assert Respondents, application of the Mobile-Sierra doctrine cannot depend upon the filing and approval of a contract where no such approval process is available from, or required by, the Commission.

33. Complainants and PUCN further argue that the ALJ erred in ruling that the "public interest" standard applies in the absence of an express clause granting the parties the right to seek revisions to their contracts pursuant to Section 206 of the FPA. These parties assert that such a clause should not be required as a prerequisite to the exercise of their Section 206 rights. They argue that in the absence of this language, the parties should be deemed to be bound only by the "just and reasonable" standard and should be free to seek unilateral changes to their contracts under the "just and reasonable" standard. Complainants and PUCN also argue that there was no evidence in this case that any party to the contracts at issue intended to be bound by the "public interest" standard. They state that if the parties had intended to limit their Section 206 rights in this way, they could have done so expressly.

34. In response, Respondents argue that the record shows that the subject contracts were voluntarily negotiated by sophisticated parties and no party expressly reserved the right to seek unilateral modifications under the "just and reasonable" standard of review. Respondents and Staff state that courts and the Commission have consistently applied the "public interest" standard of review to contracts, such as those at issue here, that contain a specific, fixed rate and where a party has not expressly preserved its right to seek unilateral modification to the contract rates.

35. While PUCN argues that third parties, including Nevada ratepayers, should not be bound by the Mobile-Sierra doctrine because they are not parties to the challenged contracts, Allegheny states that PUCN's argument, if accepted, would effectively eliminate the "public interest" standard altogether. Moreover, Allegheny states that a utility cannot simply claim that it is acting on behalf of its customers to avoid the "public interest" standard of review.[43] To that end, Respondents contend that the potential excessive burden on customers is not a basis for determining whether the "public interest" standard applies, but rather, is part of the "public interest" test itself. Respondents further assert that to allow the mere presence of an intervenor, such as PUCN, to lower the standard of review would invite any future complainant to simply line up a supporting intervenor so that the lower standard would apply to the complaint.

C. Commission Determination

36. The issue of the applicable standard of review was set for hearing because we did not believe that we had a sufficient record to definitively address the Mobile-Sierra issue.

We now have the benefit of a complete evidentiary record, including witness testimony, on the issue of the applicable standard of review. The record shows that the challenged contracts were entered into under an umbrella WSPP Agreement and consequently incorporate terms and conditions of the WSPP Agreement, including Section 6.1.[44] Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement allows parties to jointly seek modification of the rates, terms and conditions of the

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[43] See Potomac Elec. Power Co. v. Allegheny Power System, 85 FERC ¶ 61,633 (1998).

[44] Ex. NPC-14, Section 26 and NPC-14 at 56.

contracts under Section 205 of the FPA; however, it does not address the parties' FPA Section 206 rights. This is the provision that the ALJ was instructed to interpret. We agree with the ALJ's interpretation of Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement. Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement allows parties to jointly seek modification of the rates, terms and conditions of a contract under FPA Section 205, but does not address customer rights to file a complaint pursuant to FPA Section 206. On first glance, Section 6.1 is confusing since Section 205 is the statutory provision by which a seller makes a rate change filing[45] and Section 206 is the provision by which a non-seller (purchaser or other affected person) may seek a rate change. However, we conclude that the reference to a "joint" Section 205 filing evidences an intent that neither seller nor buyer be able to seek changes under Section 205 or 206 of the FPA other than under the "public interest" standard of review. Although the parties could have used specific language disallowing a unilateral filing by the seller under Section 205, or the filing of a complaint by the buyer under Section 206 of the FPA, the most reasonable reading of Section 6.1 is that they intended to exclude any unilateral filings at the Commission. As the ALJ explained, "under the maxim 'expressio unius est exclusio alterius,' (the expression of one thing is the exclusion of the other), the only interpretation of Section 6.1 of the [WSPP Agreement] is that the parties thought about, contemplated, and provided for applications to FERC, excluding all applications not specifically provided for in the contracts."[46] Therefore, the

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[45] Section 205 applies only to rate changes by public utility sellers. Thus, a buyer under a contract does not file either individually or jointly for a rate change under Section 205. It may intervene in support of a public utility's Section 205 rate filing but does not institute rate change filings under that section.

[46] Initial Decision at 65,276. An opposite interpretation would fly in the face of the D.C. Circuit Court decision in *Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F.3d 1091 (D.C. Cir. 1998). Mojave, a natural gas pipeline company, and

parties to the challenged contracts did not intend to retain for Complainants the right to unilaterally seek changes to their contracts. Thus, we conclude that Complainants must demonstrate that the contracts in question are contrary to the public interest in order to support modification of the contracts.

37. Complainants also argue that the "public interest" standard does not apply to the market-based rate contracts at issue here because these contracts have not been previously reviewed and accepted for filing by the Commission. The need for prior Commission review in these circumstances was met when, after determining that the Respondents lacked market power or had taken steps to mitigate it, the Commission authorized all of the Respondents in this proceeding to make sales of power at market-based rates.[47]

Texaco, a shipper, entered into service agreements that established a formula rate for transportation services and in which Mojave agreed that it "shall not exercise [its] rights under Section 4 of the [NGA] to change the rates to be paid by the Shipper." Id. at 1095. In subsequent proceedings to reform the contracts, the Commission found that the contracts were not subject to the Mobile-Sierra doctrine because "by expressly prohibiting only unilateral rate changes proposed under NGA Section 4, the contracts... implicitly recognize the Commission's ability to take the instant Section 5 action." Id., quoting *Mojave Pipeline Co.*, 62 FERC ¶ 61,195 at 62,365 (1993). The Court rejected the Commission's approach and explained that "the law is quite clear: absent contractual language 'susceptible to the construction that the rate may be altered while the contract[] subsists,' the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine applies." Id., 158 F.3d at 1096, quoting *Appalachian Power Co. v. FPC*, 529 F.2d 342, 348 (D.C. Cir. 1976). Sections 4 and 5 of the NGA are similar to Sections 205 and 206 of the FPA and should be interpreted consistently. *Transmission Access Policy Study Group v. FERC*, 225 F.3d 667, 686 (D.C. Cir. 2000). Our conclusion that contracts entered into pursuant to the terms and conditions set forth in the WSPP Agreement are subject to the Mobile-Sierra doctrine is consistent with Texaco.

[47] See *Allegheny Energy Supply Company*, 88 FERC ¶ 61,303 (1999); *American Electric Power Service Corporation*, 81 FERC ¶ 61,129 (1997); BP Energy Company, Director Letter Order, Docket No. ER00-

A seller that has been granted market-based rate authority may enter into power sales contracts without first seeking Commission authorization of the provisions of an individual contract (except for certain affiliate contracts). The Commission is not required specifically to review each agreement since the Commission, when it grants umbrella market-based rate authorization, pre-determines that rates under future contracts entered into pursuant to the market-based rate authorization will be just and reasonable. The "just and reasonable" standard of Section 205(e) of the FPA[48] is satisfied by the Commission's determination that the utility (and its affiliates) lacks market power or has taken sufficient steps to mitigate market power.[49] As noted in GWF Energy, LLC,[50] if we were required to examine every long-term service agreement as if the seller was seeking new market-based rate authority, it would make the original grant of market-based rate authority (i.e., the original acceptance of the market-based rate tariff) a pointless exercise of no value to anyone. For these reasons, the Commission has expressly excluded from the subjects set for hearing issues concerning the Commission's policies on granting market-based rate authority or on regulation of sellers with such

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3614-000 (Oct. 18, 2000); Calpine Energy Services , L.P., Director Letter Order, Docket No. ER00-3562-000 (Sept. 21, 2000.); Tenneco Energy Marketing Company, Director Letter Order, Docket No. ER95-428-000 (March 30 ,1995); *Enron Power Marketing, Inc.*, 65 FERC ¶ 61,305 (1993); *Southern Company Energy Marketing, LP*, 72 FERC ¶ 61,324 (1995); *Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc.*, 69 FERC ¶ 61,175 (1994); Noram Energy Services Inc., Director Letter Order, Docket No. ER 941247-000 (July25 1994).

[48] 16 U.S.C. § 824d(e) (2000).

[49] See e.g., State of California ex rel. Bill Lockyer v. British Columbia Power Exchange Corp., et al., 99 FERC ¶ 61,247, at 62,063 (2002).

[50] See *GWF Energy, LLC, et al.*, 98 FERC ¶ 61,330, at 62,390 (2002).

authority.[51]

D. Requests for Rehearing

38. We will also address Snohomish's and Senator Cantwell's requests for rehearing of the Rehearing Order. In that order, we granted Morgan Stanley's request for rehearing of the April 11 Order and ruled that its contract with Snohomish should be examined under the "public interest" standard of review upon the finding that Section 39B of the Morgan Stanley-Snohomish Confirmation Agreement explicitly restricts the parties' rights to propose changes to the contract under Sections 205 and 206 of the FPA.[52] On rehearing, Snohomish and Senator Cantwell challenge this Commission determination.

39. In particular, Snohomish argues that Section 39B of its contract with Morgan Stanley is not applicable to the instant complaint because it only addresses unilateral challenges of the contract rate, but not other terms, whereas Snohomish seeks to shorten the length of the term of the contract. We disagree. In a contract entered into pursuant to market-based rate authority, the negotiated term is intricately linked to the contract rate. The primary basis for Snohomish's complaint is the allegation that the rate in its contract with Morgan Stanley is unjust and unreasonable, not that the term of the contract is unjustifiably long.[53]

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[51] See April 11 Order at 61,191.

[52] See Rehearing Order at 62,047-48.

[53] See *Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County, Washington v. American Electric Power Service Corporation, et al.*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,296, at 62,340 (2002) (rejecting the same contention by Snohomish in regard to the identical provision in its contract with a different seller).

40. Furthermore, even if Snohomish's contention that Section 39B applies only to challenges of the contract rate were true, the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract would still be subject to the "public interest" standard of review in light of our adoption of the ALJ's interpretation of Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement. If Section 39B were not dispositive in regard to the length of the contract, then Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement would apply. Section 6.1 explicitly applies to "rates, charges, classifications, service, terms, or conditions affecting the WSPP transactions" and, as we held above, it reveals the parties' intention to disallow any unilateral changes. Thus, any proposed modifications to the WSPP Agreement and contracts entered thereunder will be evaluated under the "public interest" standard of review.

41. Additionally, Senator Cantwell asserts that the Commission should not apply the "public interest" standard of review to the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract, but should apply the "just and reasonable" standard of review, because the Mobile-Sierra doctrine does not apply to parties in this proceeding, such as Senator Cantwell, who are not signatories to the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract. We cannot find any legal precedent to support this distinction. There is no Commission or court precedent that supports a finding that a non-signatory party may challenge a Mobile-Sierra contract under the "just and reasonable" standard of review, as opposed to the "public interest" standard of review.[54]

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[54] *Carolina Power and Light Co.*, 69 FERC ¶ 61,078 (1994), cited by Senator Cantwell, is inapposite. It involved a Commission directive to revise a settlement agreement that had been submitted for Commission acceptance, and not, as in this case, a complaint challenging an existing market-based rate contract for the sale of power.

2. Whether Contract Modification is Warranted under the "Public Interest" Standard of Review

42. In their complaints, Complainants alleged that the prices in their forward bilateral contracts were the product of the California ISO and PX spot market dysfunctions. In the April 11 Order, we concluded that in the evidence presented thus far, the Complainants failed to show that the dysfunctional California ISO and PX spot markets had an adverse effect on the long-term, bilateral markets in California, Nevada and Washington. We further stated that in order to meet their burden of proof to reform these market-based contracts, Complainants would need to demonstrate that there was such an adverse effect and, if so, whether modification of any individual contract at issue is warranted.[55]

43. To this end, the Commission instructed the ALJ to consider and the parties to submit evidence on the totality of purchases and sales and the conditions present at the time the contracts were entered into. In particular, the Commission proposed the following list of evidentiary factors: (1) Complainants' overall portfolio as well as their own sales (e.g., pattern, duration, price); (2) whether Complainants' transactions were physical or financial in nature and designed to serve Complainants' load; (3) the terms, conditions and rate over the entire duration of each contract (e.g., whether the contract is front-end loaded); (4) what other alternatives were available to buyers and sellers; (5) whether at the time it was a reasonable decision to enter into these contracts (e.g., duration, scope and time period, and the participants' expectations as to the duration of dysfunctions in the California ISO and PX markets); (6) the terms and conditions of any request for proposals, and the process and

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[55] See April 11 Order at 61,191.

procedures the complainants used to evaluate the contracts, including any changes in offered rates, terms, and conditions mandated or negotiated by the Complainants; and (7) the relation of the contract rates to the Commission's previously identified benchmark for long-term contracts. The parties were also encouraged to present evidence on: (1) the effect of the contracts on the financial health of Complainants; (2) the effect of the contracts on wholesale and retail customers; (3) the impacts contract modification may have on the nation's energy markets, including, but not limited to, impacts on investment in new generation and transmission infrastructure, and effect on confidence in competitive markets; (4) the willingness of market participants to enter into long-term contracts in the future and the prices and terms and conditions of such contracts; and (5) the potential modification of other existing energy contracts.

A. Initial Decision

44. As an initial matter, the ALJ concluded that Complainants failed to prove that the dysfunctional ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected the Western long-term bilateral markets. In particular, it was established that Complainants did not perform any analysis regarding the impact of market fundamentals on the forward prices.[56] It was also found that Complainants' witnesses who tried to do analyses only measured one factor, and they did not account for all of the changing market fundamentals which impacted forward prices.[57] Furthermore, according to the ALJ's findings, Complainants did not provide any evidence that the ISO and PX spot market prices drove the spot prices throughout the West.[58] The ALJ also found that

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[56] Initial Decision at 65,290.

[57] *Id.*

[58] *Id.*

Complainants did not perform any survey or study to determine the market participants' expectations concerning the continuation of spot market dysfunctions.[59] Complainants did not prove what role any factors, including market fundamentals, had in the development of any forward price curves.[60]

45. In addition, the ALJ also found that Complainants did not present any evidence of specific manipulation by any Respondents which impacted the forward markets generally or any contract at issue in this case specifically. It was established that Respondents' witnesses refuted the allegations that the impacts of Enron's trading strategies, withholding and exercise of market power in the ISO and PX spot markets, inflated prices in the forward markets.[61] According to the ALJ's finding, the allegations of withholding in the ISO and PX markets did not contain any specific studies proving withholding by any Respondent in any market, spot or forward.[62] Moreover, it was found that no evidence was presented that any seller actually engaged in discriminatory pricing regarding the contracts at issue in this proceeding.[63]

46. Further, the ALJ examined the totality of circumstances surrounding the contracts at issue and then considered whether the Complainants have met their burden of proof under the "public interest" standard. As a result, the ALJ found that substantial evidence in this case demonstrated that the contracts should not be modified or

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[59] *Id.* at 65,289.

[60] *Id.* at 65,295.

[61] *Id.* at 65,294.

[62] *Id.*

[63] *Id.*

abrogated.[64]

47. In particular, it was established that the Nevada Companies' contracts were entered into pursuant to an Accelerated Procurement Strategy (APS), which was a "radical proposal" unsupported by any analysis or quantitative studies concerning the Companies' exposure in the event of the fall in prices.[65] The ALJ also found that the APS was undertaken due to the Nevada Companies' perceived need to secure "reliability at any price" and desire to buy as much power as they could before their counterparties discovered their already "precarious financial position."[66]

48. It was also found that the Nevada Companies did not pursue a mix of products, which was contrary to the recommendation contained in their Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) submitted to the PUCN in January 2001.[67] Instead, the Nevada Companies focused only on standardized products available in the broker markets. The ALJ determined that each of the Nevada Companies' transactions was a "brokered" transaction, i.e., it was entered into by the parties using an independent, third-party broker without Nevada Companies' knowledge of the counter party's identity.[68]

49. The ALJ also established that even though the Nevada Companies had authority to enter into forward contracts of up to three years of duration without additional

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[64] *Id.* at 65,298.

[65] *Id.* at 65,299.

[66] *Id.*

[67] *Id.*

[68] *Id.* at 65,273.

regulatory approval, virtually all of their contracts at issue in this proceeding were for terms of one year or less and many of the contracts were for terms of only 90 days.[69] Moreover, it was determined that there had been long-term, structured transactions offered, but not accepted by the Nevada Companies.[70] The ALJ concluded that since the forward curve at the time reflected backwardation,[71] lower average prices could have been obtained by entering into longer-term contracts.[72]

50. Additionally, the ALJ found that the Nevada Companies purchased more power than necessary to cover their load requirements.[73] However, they ignored the prospect that power prices could decrease. It was also established that the Nevada Companies relied on prices reflected in broker sheets, checking price quotes and reading a few trade publications to guide their expectations about the future of energy prices.[74] As determined by the ALJ, the Nevada Companies, however, did not analyze the impact of new generation on forward prices, or the supply situation for 2002 and 2003.[75] The ALJ concluded that the purchases were not made for reliability purposes.[76]

51. The ALJ further established that the Respondents

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[69] *Id.*

[70] *Id.* at 65,302 n.357.

[71] Backwardation denotes the excess of spot prices over the Long Run Marginal Costs. Id. at 65,278.

[72] *Id.* at 65,300.

[73] *Id.* at 65,301.

[74] *Id.*

[75] *Id.*

[76] *Id.*

were price takers. They did not set the price, but instead were subject to the prevailing market prices.[77] The ALJ also found that the Nevada Companies were not forced to enter into any of the contracts.[78] According to the ALJ's finding, the transactions often occurred in a matter of seconds and the evidence did not show any pressure, uncertainty, hesitancy, or a lack of understanding about what Nevada Companies were purchasing.[79]

52. It was further established that Nevada Power's contracts with Mirant, Reliant, and Morgan Stanley were sleeve transactions, i.e., transactions in which a third party enters into contracts with two other parties in order to facilitate a transaction between the two parties. The ALJ found that Nevada Power negotiated the transaction price with another third-party seller, and the sleeving Respondents facilitated the transactions by taking on Nevada Power's credit risk. It was also determined that in return for this sleeving service, Mirant, Reliant and Morgan Stanley received no or minimal fees per megawatt traded.[80] The ALJ thus concluded that it would be unfair to require any Respondent who sleeved on behalf of the Nevada Companies to pay refunds or receive a downward price adjustment for transactions that were a service to the Nevada Companies, particularly when the Respondents cannot seek recovery from the third-party market participant who sold the Respondents power.[81]

53. It was also found that certain transactions challenged

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[77] *Id.* at 65,302.

[78] *Id.*

[79] *Id.*

[80] *Id.* at 65,319.

[81] *Id.*

by the Nevada Companies were structured as locational basis swaps. The ALJ determined that the Nevada Companies entered into these swap transactions to effectively move power to a desired delivery point without having to secure transmission capacity and presented no evidence that these arrangements were unjust, unreasonable or otherwise improper in any way.[82]

54. As for Snohomish's complaint, the ALJ found that Snohomish profited from reselling power that it had purchased in the wholesale market during 2000 and early 2001.[83] The ALJ also concluded that Snohomish's decision to enter into the contract with Morgan Stanley was reasonable given the circumstances at the time.[84] Finally, it was also found that Snohomish had other alternatives available to it.[85]

55. In particular, it was found that after Snohomish's Board resolved to raise retail rates an average of thirty-five percent,[86] Snohomish started its bid solicitation process by issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) containing three bid options. Under Snohomish's RFP, Snohomish was not required to select any of the bids submitted in response to the RFP and could reject any and all bids and terminate negotiations at any time.[87]

56. The Initial Decision gives an elaborate account of negotiations that took place between Snohomish and Morgan

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[82] *Id.*

[83] *Id.* at 65,323.

[84] *Id.* at 65,303.

[85] *Id.*

[86] *Id.*

[87] *Id.*

Stanley. In particular, the ALJ found that Morgan Stanley had to resubmit a bid twice with modified terms suggested by Snohomish.[88] It was further established that throughout the negotiations, Snohomish's goal was to keep the price of the contract to under the $125 "placeholder" established by the Snohomish Board in December 2000, long before the RFP was announced.[89] Shorter terms at market rates were available to Snohomish, but rejected. Morgan Stanley's proposal to enter into an alternative arrangement of two separate deals, one for five years (at above market prices) and another for five to seven years (at below market prices) was also rejected by Snohomish. According to the ALJ, Snohomish had a choice of passing the risk of price volatility to the seller and pay a below market rate of $105 for the first five years, even if the contract had to be for a longer term. Moreover, it was determined that Snohomish had the choice of a shorter contract at higher prices, but rejected that choice.[90] In addition, the ALJ inferred from the corroborated testimony by one of Snohomish's witnesses that Snohomish's primary goal was to get a below market rate at any term. The ALJ thus concluded that Snohomish voluntarily chose the term of its contract.[91]

57. Furthermore, it was found that the negotiations (which included amendments to the WSPP Agreement, the form of confirmation and a collateral annex to manage the parties' credit risks) took place by telephone calls and electronic mail and Snohomish was represented by counsel at all times. It was established that Snohomish dictated the deadlines to complete negotiations and several of the

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[88] *Id.* at 65,304.

[89] *Id.* at 65,303.

[90] *Id.* at 65,304.

[91] *Id.*

contract terms.[92] The ALJ also found that shortly after Snohomish entered into the contract, it touted to its customers that the Morgan Stanley and other long-term contracts "give us a lot of security against the uncertainty of market fluctuations," and that the contracts insulate the ratepayers from market volatility.[93] According to the ALJ's findings, it was Snohomish's expectation that, based on its forward curve , its contract with Morgan Stanley would provide Snohomish with power at a price far below market for at least two years.[94]

58. Finally, the ALJ also found that Snohomish had several other available alternatives, such as: (1) continuing to purchase power in the spot market; (2) executing a forward contract for a term shorter than the term of the Morgan Stanley contract; (3) contracting for a share of a new generation plant or building its own generation; (4) purchasing a put option contract; and/or (5) entering into two separate agreements with a total term of nine years with one or two counterparties.[95]

59. In regard to SCWC's complaint, the ALJ found that SCWC was aware that spot market prices had risen substantially above historical levels.[96] Notwithstanding the high prices that SCWC was observing and the increased market volatility, SCWC made a decision to wait until early March 2001 to issue an RFP to replace the one-year contract it knew would expire on May 1, 2001.[97] The ALJ afforded

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[92] *Id.*

[93] *Id.*

[94] *Id*

[95] *Id*

[96] *Id.* at 65,305.

[97] *Id.*

no weight to SCWC's testimony that it had to issue an RFP at the "peak" of the energy crisis through no fault of its own and found that there is a lack of evidence of any reasons that prevented SCWC from seriously pursuing other options well before March 2001.[98] Thus, the ALJ concluded that SCWC simply chose to wait until that time before it was willing to issue an RFP and negotiate a new contract.[99]

60. It was further found that the SCWC-issued RFP was sent to the restricted list of six recipients, including Mirant. The RFP restricted bidders to terms ranging from one to seven years, indicated a preference for fixed price offers and a price in the range of $90.[100] The ALJ also determined that SCWC received three different responses with varying options, which permitted SCWC to choose the most favorable offer.[101] According to the ALJ, SCWC made no subsequent effort to seek out other offers, consult a broker, or reissue an RFP to get other proposals.[102]

61. The ALJ also found that the negotiations between Mirant and SCWC focused only on the price and there is no evidence that anyone from SCWC attempted to negotiate non-price terms during the parties' discussions from March 14 to March 16, 2001, including any specific modifications to the WSPP Agreement to permit SCWC to seek unilateral modifications to the contract.[103]

62. The ALJ also established that the $95/MWh price

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[98] *Id.*

[99] *Id.*

[100] *Id.*

[101] *Id.*

[102] *Id.*

[103] *Id.* at 65,306.

was substantially below the then prevailing expected future spot market prices for the remainder of 2001 through the summer of 2002.[104] According to the ALJ's findings, SCWC expected prices to drop in the fall of 2001; notwithstanding this fact, it chose to enter into this contract. The ALJ concluded that as a result, Mirant took on the market risk when it agreed to sell to SCWC at $95/MWh. The ALJ thus concluded that the savings to SCWC were front-end loaded and provided stability and price protection from volatility for SCWC; conversely, Mirant agreed to take an up-front loss in the early years of the contract, with the expectation that the losses would be made up in later years.[105]

63. In addition, the ALJ found SCWC's witness testimony concerning SCWC's expectations regarding the duration of the California crisis to be contradictory and thus not credible.[106] It was also found that SCWC had available to it and actively explored a variety of resource options.[107] For instance, in October 2000 (after a summer of high prices) Dynegy Inc. offered to extend its contract with SCWC, based on a "blend and extend" rate of between $46.50/MWh to $54.50/MWh, depending on the term of the extension. Moreover, the ALJ found that SCWC and Enron discussed in November 2000 a contract for differences by which SCWC could hedge costs at $55.73/MWh.[108] Also, SCWC could have chosen to rely on the spot market. Additionally, SCWC could have entered into a shorter term block forward contract for the Summer of 2001. It was also established that SCWC had a variety of responses to its RFP, from which it could

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[104] *Id.*

[105] *Id.*

[106] *Id.*

[107] *Id.* at 65,307.

[108] *Id.*

have chosen a proposal other than Mirant's, including contracts for less than five years.[109]

64. The ALJ further found that contract modification will harm credit and investor confidence by altering the perception of a formerly stable cash flow into an undependable, risky cash flow.[110] The ALJ also determined that modification of the contracts would cause market participants to suffer adverse credit and financial consequences, which could lead to hesitancy to enter into forward contracts, because of the uncertainty of the enforceability of such contracts.[111] This, it was found, could erode investor confidence and willingness to invest in merchant energy projects, which, in turn, could have an adverse effect on infrastructure development, especially at a time when Western markets need new generation and transmission. Additionally, the ALJ established that contract modification in this case could result in increased prices to compensate for increased risks.[112]

65. Additionally, the ALJ concluded that modification of these long-term contracts may preclude sellers from ever making a profit on the transaction.[113] The ALJ explained that the sellers in this case had to purchase power in the open market at prevailing market rates because they did not own generation to serve the market in question. Respondents thus covered their forward contracts by purchasing hedges, or forward contracts of their own when the overall balance of

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[109] *Id.*

[110] *Id.* at 65,308.

[111] *Id.*

[112] *Id.*

[113] *Id.* at 65,306 and 65,309.

their portfolios demanded it.[114] The ALJ further found that Respondents were paying prices in the same price range as those reflected in the contracts in dispute due to the fact that they were buying the hedges in the same market as they were selling to the Complainants in this case. Additionally, the ALJ determined that to the extent a seller was hedging a long-term contract, such as Snohomish's or SCWC's, which have prices below market up-front, the seller likely hedged the contract with high-cost power up-front for which it will not be reimbursed until later years. Consequently, the ALJ concluded that the contract reformation would deprive Respondents of the benefits of their bargains, since they have already incurred costs associated with these contracts, either through hedging the contracts or delivery of the power.[115]

66. Furthermore, the ALJ found that the Complainants did not offer any evidence to overcome their high burden under the "public interest" standard.[116] Specifically, it was established that evidence in the record does not show any discriminatory treatment of the Nevada Companies by Respondents. All contracts were standard products arranged through independent third-party brokers at or below prevailing market prices.[117]

67. The ALJ also found that the contracts in question do not impose an "excessive burden" on Complainants' customers.[118] It was determined that the Nevada Companies' projections assumed that they would file for a rate decrease in excess of 20 percent in November 2002 in their base tariff

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[114] *Id.* at 65,309.

[115] *Id.*

[116] *Id.* at 65,310.

[117] *Id.* at 65,320.

[118] *Id.*

energy rate cases. In addition, the ALJ found that the Nevada Companies' cash-flow projections assume that full payment will be made to all Respondents, except Enron; however, even if they are required to pay Enron, any rate increase would be no more than five percent. Moreover, according to the ALJ, the Nevada Companies' cash flow projections show positive cash balances for each of the next several years, even assuming dividend payments and scheduled debt repayments, which indicates that the Nevada Companies are financially healthy companies with a sufficient equity ratio to make such payments.[119]

68. Further, the ALJ found no evidence that Complainants' ability to serve their customers is threatened. Specifically, according to the ALJ, the Nevada Companies' allegations of financial distress are not supported by record evidence. The ALJ also held that the drop in the Nevada Companies' credit rating to below investment grade occurred only after issuance of the PUCN's order and thus was not the result of the contracts at issue.[120]

69. The ALJ also found that SCWC did not adduce any evidence of financial hardships either for itself or its ratepayers.[121] In accordance with the terms of the retail rate settlement reached with the CPUC, there is no rate increase at all for ratepayers who are permanent residents of SCWC's service territory and other ratepayers will face an average monthly electric bill of $35.13.[122]

70. The ALJ further found that the record does not

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[119] *Id.*

[120] *Id.* at 65,321.

[121] *Id.*

[122] *Id.*

establish that SCWC's ability to continue doing business is in any way threatened if the contract is not reformed or that the contract has a negative impact on its financial health or the financial health of its shareholders.[123] According to the ALJ's findings, the contract commenced in April, but SCWC did not need it until May when it bought the power from Mirant at $95/MWh, and sold it back to Mirant at $173/MWh, thus realizing a healthy profit.[124]

71. The ALJ also found the price of the SCWC contract to be reasonable, especially in light of the fact that Mirant, as a power marketer, had to purchase power in the market in order to resell it to SCWC. Moreover, according to the ALJ, the SCWC contract provides significant benefits, including the fact that Mirant took on the risk of supplying SCWC with a 15-MW "odd lot" sale, whereas energy is typically traded in 25-MW blocks.[125]

72. The ALJ also noted the fact that Mirant will be directly harmed if the SCWC contract is modified. According to the record, Mirant lost a substantial amount of money on the SCWC contract from April 1 to December 31, 2001 and would be able to earn any profit margin on the SCWC contract only if the contract price is honored through the term.[126]

73. As for Snohomish's contract, the ALJ concluded that Snohomish failed to meet its burden of proof because the record did not have any evidence regarding the impact of the contract upon ratepayers. The ALJ gave no weight to the

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[123] *Id.*

[124] *Id.*

[125] *Id.*

[126] *Id.* at 65,322.

testimony from six Snohomish ratepayers describing how rate increases impacted them because the rate increase preceded the contract at issue.[127] The ALJ also found irrelevant Snohomish's claim of unequal bargaining power.[128] Additionally, Snohomish's allegation regarding the discriminatory nature of the challenged contract was also found to be without merit. The ALJ explained that the Mobile-Sierra doctrine had been applied to allegations of discriminatory or preferential treatment to the detriment of other purchasers who were not parties to the contract, whereas Snohomish's claim was based on the fact that other parties who contracted with Morgan Stanley had other contract terms.[129]

74. Additionally, it was established that Snohomish derived a net profit of over $17 million in the first five months of 2001 by selling power at an average price of $134 MWh at the same time when it was purchasing power from Morgan Stanley at $105/MWh.[130] The ALJ also found that the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract was no more than five percent of Snohomish's current portfolio costs and had a small impact on rates.[131] It was determined that the contract at issue was only three percent of Snohomish's load and resulted in an eight percent increase over existing rates in 2001, while other contracts accounted for an increase of fifty-one percent over existing rates.[132]

75. Based on the above, the ALJ concluded that the

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[127] *Id.* at 65,311 and 65,322.

[128] *Id.* at 65,322.

[129] *Id.* at 65,322-33.

[130] *Id.*

[131] *Id.*

[132] *Id.*

Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof under the"public interest" standard and that even under the"just and reasonable" standard their complaints would not suffice.[133]

76. In addition, the ALJ addressed Morgan Stanley, Reliant, El Paso and Enron's contention that their contracts with the Nevada Companies had been terminated on the ground that the Nevada Companies failed to satisfy the credit requirements of the WSPP Agreement. The ALJ ruled that the Commission retained jurisdiction over the contracts which had been set for hearing and subsequently terminated and that the contract termination issue would be more pertinent to remedies if the Commission found that the contracts should be modified.[134]

B. Exceptions

77. Complainants assert that the ALJ erroneously found that the dysfunctional California ISO and PX spot markets did not adversely affect the Western long-term bilateral market. In Nevada Companies' opinion, the ALJ erred in considering whether and why the California ISO and PX spot markets were dysfunctional, because these issues have already been determined by the Commission and were not set for hearing. Nevada Power also asserts that the ALJ's erroneous determination that the short-term energy markets were not dysfunctional during most of the relevant period influenced, in turn, the ALJ's erroneous determination that the spot markets could not have adversely affected prices in the forward markets.

78. SCWC adds that spot and forward market prices were moving together and were increasing when it executed the

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[133] *Id.* at 65,325.

[134] *Id.*

Mirant contract (in March 2001), and that these price increases were attributable to market dysfunction or market power, not changes in market fundamentals, as the ALJ concluded. The PUCN asserts that the relevant markets were subject to market manipulation and other forms of anti-competitive behavior, and that these conditions led to the market dysfunctions, which resulted in excessive forward contract prices.

79. Complainants further allege that the ALJ erred in concluding that contract modification is not warranted and that the Complainants failed to meet the "public interest" standard of review. The PUCN argues that modifying the excessive contract prices at issue would not be contrary to the public interest, given the harm that these costs pose to the Nevada Companies, their ratepayers, and the market as a whole. SCWC asserts that the Mirant contract constitutes the major part of SCWC's wholesale energy purchases, and that the costs under this contract over and above the $74/MWh benchmark established by the Commission warrants contract revision, even under the "public interest" standard.

80. Respondents and Staff assert that the ALJ correctly determined that Complainants failed to demonstrate that dysfunctional ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected the long-term bilateral markets. They further argue that the ALJ properly determined that market fundamentals were a significant contributor to high prices in the spot markets during the relevant period. Mirant adds that, contrary to SCWC's assertion, the ALJ's findings are fully consistent with prior Commission findings that the ISO and PX spot markets were impacted both by dysfunctions, and also by dramatic changes in market fundamentals and competitive market conditions. Morgan Stanley argues that although prior Commission orders found that the spot and forward markets are linked, the Commission did not determine

whether dysfunctions that existed solely in the centralized California spot markets had any effect on the forward markets in California and the rest of the West.

81. Respondents and Staff argue that the ALJ properly determined that any adverse effect of the alleged dysfunctions in the ISO and PX spot markets on the Western bilateral forward market was not of a magnitude warranting modification of the challenged contract prices. In line with the Initial Decision, Respondents argue that the testimony offered by Complainants on this point was not entitled to substantial weight. Respondents assert that Complainants' witnesses assumed the conclusions they set out to prove, failed to consider relevant input costs and other factors in their analyses (such as long-run marginal costs, emissions costs, and scarcity rents), or simply presented irrelevant testimony.

82. In addition, Respondents and Staff asserts that, contrary to the Nevada Companies' assertion, it was reasonable for the ALJ to consider Complainants' purchasing practices in considering whether modification of the contracts is warranted. Staff states that in light of the directives in the April 11 Order, the rationale underlying the Nevada Companies' purchasing practices, and the extent to which they left the Nevada Companies open to unnecessary risks, was a legitimate and relevant subject for inquiry.

83. Respondents also argue that the ALJ correctly concluded that Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof under the "public interest" standard. With regard to the Nevada Companies' contract, Allegheny and Staff assert that the Nevada Companies failed each prong of the Mobile-Sierra test. Specifically, Allegheny states that the Nevada Companies never alleged, or presented any evidence showing, that the challenged contract prices were unduly

discriminatory, resulted in an imposition of an "excessive burden" on other customers, or threatened their ability to service their customers. Allegheny asserts that the Nevada Companies made only generalized assertions, without factual support.

84. With regard to SCWC, Staff agrees with the ALJ that there is a lack of substantial evidence showing that the financial health of SCWC has been negatively impacted by the subject contract, particularly in light of a recent settlement approved by the CPUC. Staff asserts that while SCWC contests most of the ALJ's findings, it denies virtually none of the facts adduced by the ALJ and offers no probative evidence that the contract with Mirant produces an excessive burden.

85. As for Snohomish's complaint, Morgan Stanley and Staff argue that Snohomish failed to demonstrate that the term of its contract with Morgan Stanley might impair its financial ability to continue service. On the contrary, Morgan Stanley contends that the ALJ correctly determined that Snohomish's 2001 Financial Statement shows that its financial condition is strong. In any case, Morgan Stanley argues that the ALJ rightly determined that there are complicating factors in any Commission effort to apply the excessive burden test to mostly retail customers of complainants like Snohomish, since the Commission has no jurisdiction over the rates charged by a buyer, such as Snohomish, to its retail customers.

86. In addition, Enron challenges the ALJ's finding that further examination of the Enron contracts with the Nevada Companies in this case may be necessary pending the outcome of two other cases involving Enron now before the

Commission.[135] Enron argues that issues related to the Enron contracts were litigated to finality in this proceeding.

87. In response to Enron, SCWC, Nevada Companies, and Staff note that the April 11 Order specifically stated that issues relating to Respondents' exercise of market power or market manipulation were excluded from the proceeding, because that nature of inquiry was considered duplicative of matters pending before the Commission in Fact-Finding Investigation into Possible Manipulation of Electric and Natural Gas Prices, Docket No. PA02-2- 000. SCWC and Nevada Companies further assert that pursuant to the Commission's admonishment, the ALJ prohibited parties from introducing evidence to demonstrate that any of the terms and conditions in the contracts at issue resulted from the exercise of market power or market manipulation. Accordingly, SCWC and Nevada Companies dispute Enron's assertion that, if the Commission upholds the Initial Decision, Complainants are barred by the operation of res judicata and collateral estoppel from seeking any further review of those contracts based on the possible market manipulation by Respondents.

88. SCWC further asserts that if the Commission upholds the ALJ's conclusion that the public interest standard applies to the contracts at issue, the Commission should not reach a final decision on the merits of SCWC's complaint until the investigation in Docket No. PA02-2-000 is complete and SCWC is afforded an opportunity to demonstrate that market abuses and manipulation adversely affected the Mirant contract.

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[135] The two referenced cases are *Public Utilities Comm'n of the State of California v. El Paso Natural Gas Co.*, Docket No. RP00-241-000 and *El Paso Electric Co.*, Docket No. EL02-113-000.

89. Staff, however, argues that Complainants were not required to demonstrate market power or manipulation to prevail and that therefore, it is unnecessary to reopen the record in this proceeding unless the investigation in Docket No. PA02-2-000 suggests it is so warranted.

90. Nevada Companies and Staff also urge rejection of Enron's alternative request that the Commission find that its unilateral termination of its contracts with Nevada Companies extinguished the Commission's jurisdiction over the contracts from the moment of termination. Nevada Companies state that the contract termination issue has never been set for hearing by the Commission and the ALJ never reached a conclusion on Enron's claim that it had terminated its contracts with Nevada Companies. Even if Enron had terminated the contracts, Nevada Companies and Staff argue that unilateral termination would not extinguish the Commission's jurisdiction over the issue of whether the contract prices are just and reasonable under Section 206. Staff adds that Enron's suggestion that Commission jurisdiction is predicated on physical delivery is misguided. Staff states that the history of Commission actions, which has been affirmed by the courts, shows that cancellation of a plant before completion, or the cancellation of deliveries, does not end the Commission's jurisdiction over a facility or contract.

C. Oral Argument

91. At the April 23 oral argument, the Complainants argued that in light of the market manipulation findings made in the Staff Report released on March 26, 2003, additional grounds exist to abrogate the contracts in question. In particular, Complainants argued that the Mobile-Sierra "public interest" standard has been met because the Staff investigation revealed that sellers engaged in the exercise of

market power and /or market manipulation which significantly affected the forward market at the time the contracts were negotiated. Nevada Companies further stated that the contracts should not be upheld because they were obtained by fraud, misrepresentation and bad faith. Nevada Companies explained that Respondents were unlawfully manipulating market prices, thereby engaging in fraud and deception in violation of their market-based rate tariffs.

92. Furthermore, Nevada Companies requested that at the very least the Commission remand this case to the ALJ to allow Complainants to introduce evidence on market manipulation, which they were precluded from submitting by the order setting the complaints for hearing. Nevada Companies added that until on-going and future investigations of the Respondents' conduct during the relevant period of time are completed, the Commission cannot determine whether contract reformation is in the public interest.

93. Respondents argued that the Staff Report does not purport to show the effect of the California spot market dysfunctions on forward prices in the West, but rather represents a correlation analysis. In Respondents' opinion, the Staff Report does not reveal new facts warranting a remand to the ALJ. Respondents stated that the market manipulation findings in the Staff Report are irrelevant in this case, since the market manipulation factor could only be relevant in determining the cause of the spot market dysfunctions. The dysfunctional nature of the California spot market was presumed from the very beginning and all that Complainants were required to show is the causal connection between those dysfunctions and forward market prices, which, in Respondents' opinion, Complainants failed to do.

D. Commission Determination

94. In deciding whether the Complainants have met their burden of proof under the "public interest" standard of review to justify contract modification in these cases, we rely on the evidentiary record developed in this proceeding and also take into consideration the findings of the Staff Report and evidence submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding. The Staff Report found that spot market distortions flowed through to forward power prices, particularly those for contracts of a short-term nature, i.e., one to two years time to delivery. In addition, the Staff Report and the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding suggest that the California ISO and PX markets were subjected to market manipulation and gaming. The Staff Report conclusions and the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding documents are being contested in "show cause" proceedings involving allegations and/or findings of manipulation in the spot markets. However, even if we were to assume that these allegations and/or findings were true, they would not be determinative of the issues in the instant proceeding. The Commission has already concluded that the California ISO and PX spot markets were dysfunctional during the relevant period and that rates in those markets were unjust and unreasonable.[136] Evidence of market manipulation merely suggests yet another cause of the spot market dysfunctions and the unjust and unreasonable rates in the spot markets. However, a finding that the unjust and unreasonable spot market prices caused forward bilateral prices to be unjust and unreasonable would be relevant to contract modification only where there is a "just and reasonable" standard of review.[137] As we have

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[136] See e.g., *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. Sellers and Ancillary Serv.*, 93 FERC ¶ 61,121, at 61,359-60 and 61,372 (2000); order on reh'g and clarification, 97 FERC ¶ 61,275, at 62,225 (2001).

[137] This conclusion is consistent with the Staff Report recommendation that, only for contracts subject to the "just and reasonable" standard of

previously concluded, the contracts at issue in this proceeding do not provide for such a standard but rather evidence an intent that the contracts may be changed only pursuant to the "public interest" standard of review. Under the " public interest" standard, to justify contract modification it is not enough to show that forward prices became unjust and unreasonable due to the impact of spot market dysfunctions; it must be shown that the rates, terms, and conditions are contrary to the public interest.[138] As fully discussed below, we conclude that the Complainants failed to make such a showing.

95. As determined by the ALJ and affirmed in this order, Complainants in this proceeding must meet the "public interest" standard in order to justify the requested contract modification. Based on the record, we conclude that the Complainants have failed to demonstrate that any of the three prongs announced in the Sierra case has been met or that any other factor introduced into evidence warrants a finding that any of the contracts is contrary to the public interest and should be modified.

Sierra Three-Prong Test

96. We find that there is no credible record evidence that the contracts at issue are placing the Complainants in financial distress so as to threaten their ability to continue service or that other customers will bear an excessive burden as a result of upholding the challenged contracts. In addition, there is no evidence that the contracts terms are unduly

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review, the Commission should send the Staff Report findings on the influence of the spot prices on forward prices to the ALJs to use as they see fit to resolve complaints. See Staff Report at V-19.

[138] See e.g., *FPC v. Sierra Pacific Power Co.*, 350 U.S. 348, 354-5 (1956).

discriminatory.

97. The record demonstrates that the Nevada Companies' cash flow projections show positive cash balances for each of the next several years, even assuming dividend payments and scheduled debt repayments.[139] The Nevada Companies' cash flow projections indicate that they continue to have adequate access to capital markets.[140] All that the Nevada Companies offered in support of their position are unsupported assertions of financial hardship. The record shows that the Nevada Companies' financial condition was not caused by the contracts at issue here. By admission of Nevada Companies' own witness, the Nevada Companies were in a precarious financial position by November 2000, well before the majority of the challenged contracts were executed.[141] Any additional financial distress by the Nevada Companies resulted from the PUCN's decision disallowing recovery of costs associated with contracts that are not at issue in this proceeding.[142] The drop in the Nevada Companies' credit rating also occurred in response to this PUCN decision.[143]

98. Nevada Companies failed to show that the contract terms at issue impose an excessive burden on their customers. The record shows that in November 2002, Nevada Companies projected rate decreases of approximately 20 percent for retail service commencing June 1 and August 1, 2003.[144] According to Nevada Companies'

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[139] Ex. CES-18, CES-19, and CES-20.

[140] Tr. at 2494:1-5 (Shiffel); Ex. CES-20 at ¶ ¶ 32-33, 36, and 42.

[141] Ex. NPC-8 at 3:18.

[142] Ex. CES-2 at 26-27; Tr. at 2336 and 2676.

[143] Ex. CES-2 at 23:7-8.

[144] Ex. CES-20 at ¶ ¶ 5, 9-10; see also, Ex. CES-17 at 1-2.

own witness, in the event that Nevada Companies are required to pay all the Respondents, including Enron, the resulting rate increase would be no more than 5 percent.[145]

99. As for SCWC , there is no evidence that the challenged contract placed SCWC in financial distress threatening its ability to continue service.[146] In fact, SCWC realized a profit when it sold power purchased under the SCWC-Mirant agreement back to Mirant at a higher price.[147] Also, by entering into the contract with Mirant, SCWC avoided the risk of price volatility and achieved rate certainty.[148] The savings to SCWC resulting from its forward contracting and marketing strategy amounted to $13.26 million.[149] Similarly to Nevada Companies, SCWC offered no evidence showing that the challenged contracts impose an excessive burden on its customers. The record evidence establishes that there was no rate increase for SCWC's ratepayers who are permanent residents of SCWC's service territory pursuant to the terms of the settlement between SCWC and CPUC.[150] Under the terms of the settlement, the other group of SCWC's ratepayers, owners of second homes in SCWC's service area, were to face an average monthly electric bill of $ 35.13.[151]

100. The record also demonstrates that Snohomish presented no evidence that its contract with Morgan Stanley

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[145] Tr. at 2545:15-16.

[146] Tr. at 2933:22-2934:1.

[147] SCWC bought the power from Mirant at $95/MWh and sold it back to Mirant at $173/MWh. Tr. 2907-08.

[148] Tr. at 2943-44.

[149] Ex. SCW-1 at 11:1-14.

[150] Tr. at 2934:8:16.

[151] Tr. at 2933:22-2934:1.

adversely affected Snohomish or its ratepayers. The Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract is no more than five percent of Snohomish's portfolio costs[152] and constitutes only three percent of Snohomish's load, resulting in an eight percent increase over 2001 rates, while other contracts account for rate increase of fifty-one percent.[153] Moreover, Snohomish's rate increase occurred prior to Snohomish's negotiating its contract with Morgan Stanley, and prior to issuing the RFP for the power purchase in question.[154]

101. Furthermore, Complainants have failed to present evidence showing that the challenged contracts are unduly discriminatory. Only Snohomish alleged that its contract with Morgan Stanley is discriminatory because other parties who contracted with Morgan Stanley have other terms. This is not the type of discrimination contemplated by the Mobile-Sierra doctrine. Other terms in other contracts are not relevant to the determination that the contract at issue in this case is discriminatory. In the past, the Mobile-Sierra doctrine has been applied to allegations of discriminatory or preferential treatment to the detriment of other purchasers who are not parties to the contract.[155] No such showing has been made by Complainants.

Evidence on Totality of Circumstances

102. In addition to the evidence on the effects of the

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[152] Tr. at 1661.

[153] Staff IB at 55; Tr. 1661-62 and 1770.

[154] On December 13, 2000, Snohomish's Board resolved to raise retail rates an average of thirty-five percent, which allowed Snohomish to purchase up to 100 MW of power at a melded cost of up to $125/MWh. Ex. MSC-116 at 910; SNO-1 at 4:195:2; Tr. at 1723 and 1724.

[155] See *Papago Tribal Authority v. FERC*, 723 F.2d 950, 953 n. 4 (D.C. Cir. 1983).

challenged contracts on the parties and Complainants' customers, the ALJ has developed an extensive evidentiary record on the totality of circumstances preceding and following the execution of the contracts at issue. Specifically, the record shows that the Nevada Companies' contracts were standard products arranged through independent third-party brokers[156] and, consequently, the Respondents were price takers.[157] It also appears from the record that the Nevada Companies were trying to buy as much power as they could before sellers discovered their already precarious financial position.[158] To this end, the Nevada Companies abandoned their usual practice of issuing monthly RFPs to procure power[159] and employed a rather aggressive procurement strategy.[160] As a result, the Nevada Companies purchased more power than was necessary to serve their native load.[161] In fact, the Nevada Companies doubled their wholesale power purchases from the previous year, buying in excess of their own sales to retail customers, and selling more than four times as much wholesale power as they did in 2000.[162]

103. Additionally, the Nevada Companies failed to hedge for the possible risk that spot market prices might fall,[163] and

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[156] Tr. at 2252:12-17; Ex. CES-1 at 3:15-27; AEP-1 at 3:21-4:16; EPME-22 at 18:6-14; MSC-21 at 8:19-9:8; RES-1 at 4:14-17.

[157] Ex. S-1 at 28:14-16; CES-1 at 4:2-15; EPME-22 at 19:7- 8.

[158] Ex. CES-2 at 22:16-24:3; Tr. at 2273:10-2274:16.

[159] Ex. CES-2 at 18; CES-8; Ex. CES-39; S-6 at 16-17; Tr. 2328, 2581-83, and 2614-15.

[160] Ex. CES-2 at 18:12-13; Tr. at 2655:22-2656:2; Ex. CES- 2 at 15:8; Tr. at 2629:24-2630:1.

[161] Ex. S-6 at 28:15-29:2.

[162] Ex. EPME-18.

[163] Tr. at 2583-86; 2596-97.

did not pursue a mix of products to reduce risks associated with market volatility through portfolio diversification. Contrary to the recommendations in their Comprehensive Energy Plan filed with PUCN in January 2001,[164] Nevada Companies bought standardized, fixed-price products.[165] In fact, Nevada Companies rejected longer-term transactions that were offered. The evidence establishes that the Nevada Companies considered two Calpine proposals at prices substantially lower than the challenged contract rate.[166] Nevada Power also concurrently considered a ten-year proposal from Duke at a similarly lower price.[167] The Nevada Companies, however, did not pursue these options.

104. Furthermore, the record demonstrates that the Nevada Companies made wholesale purchases of firm power from thirty-nine separate providers in 2000 and 2001, and Sierra Pacific reported purchases from forty-five to forty-seven separate providers in the same time frame.[168] Thus, considering the number of sellers available, it can be reasonably concluded that Complainants had choices, i.e., they were free to reject offers and turn to other suppliers.

105. As for the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract, the record establishes that the execution of this contract was preceded by extensive bid solicitation process and negotiations of the terms of the contract. Snohomish issued an RFP to 17 suppliers and in response received five bids, including Morgan Stanley's.[169] In fact, Snohomish required

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[164] Ex. CES-2 at 20:18-21:7 and CES-9 at 17.

[165] Tr. at 2336:23-2337:1.

[166] Ex. CES-35.

[167] Ex. CES-34; CES-35; Tr. at 2573:10; 2576:13-15.

[168] Ex. RES-12 at 2.

[169] Ex. SNO-4 at 5:6-8; Ex. SNO-5. Tr. at 1796:1-15.

Morgan Stanley to submit its bid twice with modified terms suggested by Snohomish.[170] The record is also quite clear that Snohomish voluntarily chose the length of its contract that it now challenges. Shorter terms at lower rates were available to Snohomish but were rejected.[171] In addition, the price Snohomish negotiated for its contract with Morgan Stanley is substantially lower than the "placeholder" price of $125/MWh authorized by Snohomish's Board. [172]

106. Moreover, Snohomish made a profit from reselling the power it purchased from Morgan Stanley under the challenged contract. During the first five months of 2001, Snohomish sold power for a net profit of $17 million, at an average price of $134/MWh, [173] while at the same time buying power from Morgan Stanley for $105/MWh.

107. In regard to the SCWC-Mirant contract, the record demonstrates that it was SCWC's choice to wait until March 2001 when the energy prices were at their peak to start a bid solicitation process to replace its contract with Dynegy Inc. that was to expire in May 2001.[174] SCWC's issued RFP indicated a preference for fixed price offers for terms ranging from one to seven years at a price within the range of $90/MWh. [175] Despite the restrictive nature of the bid solicitation process employed by SCWC,[176] it received three

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[170] Tr. at 1743:20-1744:5; 1752-53; 3984-85; Ex. MSC-8 at 10.

[171] Tr. at 1586-87, 1592; 1758, 1776.

[172] Staff IB at 55; Tr. at 1793.

[173] Tr. at 2405:1-2410:5 and 2408-09.

[174] Ex. SCW-1 at 12:5-10.

[175] Tr. at 2900-02 and 2903; Ex. MAEM-2 at 13; MAEM-9; Tr. 2904-5. Tr. at 2901:1-4; 2903:3-7; Ex. SCW-4 at 12.

[176] Tr. at 2893:19-2894:20 and 2897:8-18; Ex. SCW-1 at 17:18.

different responses to its proposal with varying options.[177] By SCWC's own admission, at the time of contract execution, it expected the prices to drop;[178] however, such expectations did not prevent it from entering into the challenged contract. Moreover, the rate agreed upon in the SCWC-Mirant contract was lower than the expected future spot market price.[179] SCWC recognized in its CPUC testimony that a 15 MW block of energy should carry "a slight pricing premium"[180] because energy is typically traded in 25 MW blocks. Moreover, SCWC realized a profit by buying the power from Mirant at $95/MWh, and selling it back to Mirant at $173/MWh,[181] whereas Mirant lost a substantial amount of money on the SCWC contract from April 1 to December 31, 2001.[182]

CONCLUSION

108. Based on the above, we conclude that the contracts at issue were the result of choices voluntarily made by the Complainants and to the extent the Complainants left themselves open to unnecessary risks, it was also their choice. The record also establishes that the Complainants had better alternatives and were not compelled to enter into the contracts at issue here. For example, the Nevada Companies could have pursued a more balanced purchasing strategy, that is, instead of buying standard products with three to twelve months to delivery, Nevada Companies could have pursued a diversified portfolio of contracts of different

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[177] Tr. at 2894:21-24; 2944:10-17.

[178] Tr. at 2927:11-2928:1.

[179] Ex. MAEM-2 at 13:24-28 & 20:8-9; SCWC-4 at 4.

[180] Ex. MAEM-30 at JAD-10-11.

[181] Tr. at 2907-08.

[182] Ex. MAEM-16 at 32:14-16.

length arranged through the RFP process, as well as independent brokers. Snohomish had an option of executing a contract for a shorter term than its contract with Morgan Stanley or entering into two separate agreements with a total term of the challenged contract. SCWC also had available to it and explored a variety of resource options. For example, the record demonstrates that it turned down the proposal by Dynegy Inc. to renew their existing contract at a rate substantially lower than the contract rate in question.[183]

109. Finally, there is nothing in the record before the ALJ, in the Staff Final Report, or in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding evidence to support a finding that there was market manipulation specific to the long-term contracts at issue here.

110. Therefore, based on the record, it appears that the Complainants' only basis for contract modification is their dissatisfaction with the bargain. Commission and court precedent clearly establish that allegations that contracts have become uneconomic by the passage of time do not render them contrary to the public interest under the FPA.[184] The record clearly indicates that the challenged transactions were the result of Complainants' voluntary choices. Therefore, because there is no evidence of unfairness, bad faith, or duress in the original negotiations, the Complainants are not entitled to change their bargains.[185]

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[183] Ex. MAEM-16 at 21:6-22:2.

[184] See *Potomac Elec. Power Co. v. FERC*, 210 F.3d 403, 409 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (citing *Soyland Power Coop. Inc. v. Central Illinois Pub. Serv. Co.*, 51 FERC ¶ 61,004, at 61,013 (1990). See also *Papago*, 723 F.2d at 953. *Sierra*, 350 U.S. at 354-355.

[185] See *Potomac Electric Power Company v. FERC*, 210 F.3d 403, 410 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

111. For these reasons, we affirm the ALJ's ruling and find that the Complainants have failed to meet their burden of proof under the "public interest" standard and contract modification in this case is thus not warranted. Accordingly, we deny the exceptions.

112. In addition, we will address Enron's contention that the Commission determination in this case should preclude further challenges to its contracts with Nevada Power. In this order, we base our decision on the record in this proceeding and will not prejudge the Commission determination to be made in another proceeding involving Enron based on the record in that proceeding.

3. Miscellaneous Issues

113. Other issues litigated at the hearing were: (1) whether the Collateral Annex of the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract is contrary to the public interest; and (2) whether Merrill Lynch Capital Services (Merrill Lynch) or Allegheny was the real party in interest in the transactions identified in the Nevada Power's complaint against Allegheny. We address these issues below, as well as certain motions filed by Snohomish and SCWC.

A. Collateral Annex

114. Snohomish requests that the Commission either immediately terminate or substantially reform the Collateral Annex. In connection with this, Snohomish argues that the "just and reasonable" standard, rather than the "public interest" standard, applies to the evaluation of the Collateral Annex.

115. The ALJ found that by virtue of Section 35 of the

WSPP Agreement,[186] the Collateral Annex is part of the WSPP Agreement and thus is governed by Section 6.1, which demonstrates the intent of the parties to disallow unilateral filings. The ALJ, therefore, concluded that the Collateral Annex is also subject to the "public interest" standard and thus will not be reformed.[187]

116. On exceptions, Snohomish and Staff assert as error the ALJ's determination regarding the Collateral Annex. Staff argues that the "public interest" standard does not apply in this case because the Commission never reviewed the amended Collateral Annex provision included in the Morgan Stanley-Snohomish contract, thus it has never been determined to be just and reasonable. For this same reason, Staff asserts that if the "public interest" standard is to be applied in this case, the Commission's more flexible standard is warranted.

117. Staff further asserts that because Section 39B of the contract limits the parties' rights to seek unilateral changes to "rates," it must be concluded that the parties did not intend to prohibit unilateral changes to such non-rate provisions as the Collateral Annex. Staff also argues that modification is warranted because the Collateral Annex, by making Morgan Stanley the sole Valuation Agent, unduly favors Morgan Stanley at the expense of Snohomish.

118. Morgan Stanley states the Collateral Annex should not be subject to a modified, or "flexible," "public interest"

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[186] Section 35 of the WSPP Agreement provides in pertinent part: "... that all transactions, together with this Agreement and the related Confirmation Agreement(s) form a single, integrated agreement, and agreements and transactions are entered into in reliance on the fact that the agreements and each transaction form a single agreement between the Parties.

[187] Initial Decision at 65,313-15.

standard. Morgan Stanley maintains that, consistent with the ALJ's finding, the WSPP Agreement, Confirmation Agreement, Attachment A, and the Collateral Annex form a single, integrated document, which is wholly subject to the Mobile-Sierra standard of review. Morgan Stanley states that although the Commission has at times expressed an intent to apply a standard that is more flexible than the "public interest" standard, that has only occurred under limited circumstances (such as when the subject contract is between affiliates and not the result of an arm's length negotiation) not present here.[188]

119. We affirm the ALJ's ruling. We find that the WSPP Agreement, Collateral Annex, Confirmation Agreement and Attachment A form a single, integrated agreement, which, as we held above, is to be reviewed under the "public interest" standard. Consistent with our conclusions above, Snohomish has failed to justify modification of the Collateral Annex.

B. Real Party in Interest

120. Allegheny asserts that it is not the right respondent in this case because the contracts submitted with Nevada Power's complaint list Merrill Lynch as the other counter party to the contracts. Initially, these contracts were executed by Merrill Lynch. Subsequently, Merrill Lynch and Allegheny entered into the Asset Contribution and Purchase Agreement (APA) pursuant to which Merrill Lynch transferred all of its rights, title, and interest in certain wholesale power sales agreements and associated books and records to Allegheny.[189] Allegheny, however, argues that the Nevada Power contracts were not assigned to Allegheny

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[188] *Morgan Stanley cites to Northeast Utilities Serv. Co.*, 66 FERC ¶ 61,3332 at 62,087-87 (1994).

[189] *Merrill Lynch Capital Services, Inc.*, 94 FERC ¶ 62,114 (2001).

because Nevada Power never provided its written consent to the assignment, as required by Section 14 of the WSPP Agreement.[190]

121. In response, Nevada Power argues that the assignment of the contracts in question occurred pursuant to Section 14 of the WSPP Agreement because the transfer to Allegheny was to a successor in operation with comparable or higher creditworthiness.

122. Allegheny argues that the parties' dealings after closing of the APA demonstrate that Allegheny is not the successor in operation to Merrill Lynch. In particular, Allegheny states that after the sale of assets, Merrill Lynch retained its status of a seller with respect to the contracts at issue and entered into the hedge contracts with Allegheny, whereby Allegheny would financially benefit from the Nevada Power contracts via a back-to-back hedge agreement. In addition, according to Allegheny, Nevada Power conducted business as though Merrill Lynch were the counterparty, as evidenced by Merrill Lynch's sending invoices to Nevada Power, which then made payment directly to Merrill Lynch. Allegheny further explains that Merrill Lynch's representations in the Section 203 application to the Commission for authorization of transfer of its jurisdictional facilities to Allegheny does not contradict

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[190] Section 14 of the WSPP Agreement covering a "Transfer of Interest in Agreement" states: "No party shall voluntarily transfer its membership under this Agreement without the written consent and approval of all other Parties except to a successor in operation of the applicable properties of such Party. With regard to the transfer of the rights and obligations of any Party associated with transactions under the Service Schedules, neither Party may assign such rights or obligations unless a) the other Party provides its prior written consent which shall not be unreasonably withheld; or b) the assignment is to a successor in operation whose creditworthiness is comparable to or higher than that of the assigning Party."

Allegheny's position that no contract assignment has taken place. Allegheny contends that the parties intended to assign the Nevada Power contracts to Allegheny upon the closing of the APA, but then abandoned this intention when Nevada Power refused to sign a collateral agreement with Allegheny.

123. The ALJ found that the contracts were not assigned pursuant to the WSPP Agreement because Allegheny is not "a successor in operation" to Merrill Lynch. After closing of the APA, Merrill Lynch continued its wholesale electricity trading operation on a reduced basis. The ALJ further found that no assignment of the Nevada Power contracts occurred because Nevada Power did not consent to the assignment. As a result, in accordance with Section 5.05 of the APA,[191] Merrill Lynch acted as Allegheny's agent and trustee with respect to these contracts. The ALJ thus concluded that based on the nature of the Merrill Lynch-Allegheny relationship, Allegheny is the right respondent in this case because it is the principal, while Merrill Lynch is merely an

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[191] Section 5.05 of the APA states: " If any consent for any agreement is not obtained and such agreement shall not be assigned, transferred, leased, subleased, licensed or sublicensed, the Sellers shall, to the extent possible without incurring any liability to any third party for which the Purchasers have not agreed to reimburse the Sellers, keep the agreement in effect (such agreements kept in effect are referred to herein as the "Seller Maintained Agreements") and to the extent reasonably possible give the Purchasers the benefit without limitation: (I) cooperating with the Purchasers in holding any rights under agreements for which no consent to assign rights to Purchaser is obtained ("Non-Assignable Rights") in trust for the Purchasers or acting as agent for the Purchasers; (ii) enforcing any rights of the Sellers arising from such Non-Assignable Rights against the issuers thereof or the other party or parties thereto; (iii) taking all such actions and doing, or causing to be done, all such things at the request of the Purchasers as shall be reasonably necessary and proper in order that the value of any Non-Assignable Rights shall be preserved and shall inure to the benefit of Purchasers; and (iv) paying over to the Purchase[r]s all monies or other assets collected by or paid to the Sellers in respect of such Non-Assignable Rights.

agent.[192]

124. On exceptions, Allegheny claims that the ALJ misinterpreted the APA between Allegheny and Merrill Lynch. Nevada Power, however, asserts that the ALJ correctly found that the APA transferred the contracts to Allegheny. Nevada Power states that evidence of the transfer includes Allegheny's purchase of Merrill Lynch's entire wholesale electric energy trading business, including the Nevada Power contracts; the numerous representations made to the public, Merrill Lynch's customers and the Commission regarding the purchase; and Allegheny's performance under the contracts. In addition, Nevada Power states that whether Allegheny is the seller is irrelevant to whether the Commission has jurisdiction to determine the justness and reasonableness of the rates at issue here and the Commission's jurisdiction over the contracts in this case is not dependent on the identity of the parties currently before it.

125. We agree with Nevada Power that our decision to uphold these contracts does not depend on whether the seller for one of the contracts was Merrill Lynch or Allegheny. Moreover, since our decision to uphold the contracts means that we will not require refunds, this issue becomes moot and thus need not be addressed on the merits in this order.

4. Procedural Motions

A. Snohomish's Motion to Reopen the Record

126. Snohomish filed a motion to reopen the record to admit, or in the alternative, take official notice of the Staff Report on price manipulation in the Western markets;

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[192] Initial Decision at 65,328-32.

evidence submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding, the Puget Sound proceeding in Docket No. EL01-10, et al.,[193] and the Enron investigation proceedings in Docket Nos. EL02-113, EL02-114 and EL02-115; and all public documents relating to the settlement in Docket No. IN01-3[194] and the public records from other pending Western forward contract proceedings.[195] Snohomish argues that the records of the above-listed proceedings contain substantial evidence that plainly contradicts the Initial Decision and the positions taken by the Respondents.

127. PUCN filed an answer in support of Snohomish's motion. PUCN also believes that the Commission should reopen the record or take official notice of evidence of market abuse submitted in other Western market proceedings. PUCN believes that evidence in those proceedings shows that manipulation and other market abuses negatively impacted forward prices. PUCN also suggests introducing in the record of the instant proceeding evidence produced in the Docket No. PA03-1-000, et al. proceeding.[196]

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[193] *Puget Sound Energy, Inc. v. Jurisdictional Sellers of Energy*, 101 FERC ¶ 61,304 (2002), order on clarification, 102 FERC ¶ 61,163 (2003).

[194] *AES Southland, Inc. & Williams Energy Marketing & Trading Co.*, 95 FERC ¶ 61,167 (2001).

[195] *Public Utilities Com'n of the State of California v. Sellers of Long-Term Contracts to the California Dep't of Water Resources, et al.*, 99 FERC ¶ 61,087 (2002), order on reh'g, 100 FERC ¶ 61,098 (2002); and *PacifiCorp v. Reliant Energy Serv., Inc., et al.*, 99 FERC ¶ 61,381 (2002), reh'g pending.

[196] *America Electric Power Co.*, 103 FERC ¶ 61,089 (2003) (directing submission of information with respect to internal processes for reporting trading data).

128. Indicated Sellers[197] and Morgan Stanley argue that there is no procedural basis for reopening the record because Snohomish has failed to show that an extraordinary change in core circumstances has occurred since the record was closed on October 24, 2002. Similarly, Indicated Sellers object to Snohomish's alternative request to take official notice of evidence from other proceedings. In their opinion, these materials are not subject to official notice because they are being contested. Indicated Sellers also argue that the Commission should not consider either reopening the record or taking official notice of evidence from other proceedings because addition of new material to the record in this proceeding will not change the outcome of this proceeding. Morgan Stanley adds that the information Snohomish seeks to introduce into the record of this proceeding is outside the scope of the instant proceeding and is irrelevant for determination of the issues being litigated. Morgan Stanley further argues that contrary to Snohomish's allegations, the phone transcripts submitted in the Docket Nos. EL02-60 and EL02-62 proceeding are not new evidence. According to Morgan Stanley, these transcripts were produced to Snohomish prior to the closing of the evidentiary record in the instant proceeding.

129. In its answer, Morgan Stanley included a motion requesting that the Commission impose sanctions on Snohomish for burdening Morgan Stanley and the Commission with its baseless motion to reopen the record. Snohomish responds that the imposition of sanctions is not warranted because Snohomish did not make false statement in its previous motion.

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[197] Indicated Sellers are comprised of Allegheny, BP, Calpine, Enron, Mirant, and Reliant. El Paso and Morgan Stanley support certain parts of the pleading.

130. Snohomish and SCWC filed answers to Indicated Sellers' and Morgan Stanley's answers to Snohomish's motion. Morgan Stanley filed an answer to Snohomish's answer to its motion for sanctions. Answers to answers are generally not permitted pursuant to Rule 213(a)(2) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, 18 C.F.R. § 385.213(a)(2), unless otherwise permitted by the decisional authority. We are not persuaded to allow these answers to answers.

131. The Commission may reopen the record in its discretion where there is good cause.[198] The Commission views good cause as consisting of extraordinary circumstances, that is, a change in circumstances that is more than just material, but goes to the very heart of the case.[199] In deciding whether to exercise its discretion, "the Commission looks to whether or not the movant has demonstrated the existence of extraordinary circumstances that outweigh the need for finality in the administrative process."[200] As the Commission explained in Opinion No. 238, "we recognize of course that changes have occurred since the close of the record. But such changes always occur.

Yet litigation must come to an end at some point. Hence the general rule is that the record once closed will not be reopened."[201]

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[198] 18 C.F.R. § 385.716 (2003).

[199] *CMS Midland, Inc.*, 56 FERC ¶ 61,177 at 61,624, reh'g denied, 56 FERC ¶ 61,361 (1991).

[200] *East Texas Electric Coop., Inc. v. Central and South West Serv., Inc.*, 94 FERC ¶ 61,218 at 61,801 (2001) (denying reopening of record where movant sought to use actual data which became available after the close of the record in place of hypothetical data used at hearing).

[201] *Transwestern Pipeline Co.*, Opinion No. 238, 32 FERC ¶ 61,009 (1985), reh'g denied, Opinion No. 238-A, 36 FERC ¶ 61,175 at 61,453 (1986).

132. The information now in the record provides a sufficient basis for our conclusions here. The evidence that Complainants seek to introduce into the record will not change the outcome of this proceeding, as more fully discussed above.

133. Now we turn to Snohomish's alternative request to take official notice of the Staff Report and evidence submitted in the proceedings specified by Snohomish. We find that Snohomish's request inasmuch it pertains to the Staff Report and 100-Day Discovery evidence to be moot because we have considered these findings and evidence as part of the record of this proceeding. As previously discussed, we conclude that, even if we assume that the allegations and findings contained in the Staff Report and the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding were true, they would not be determinative of the issues in this proceeding. However, we deny Snohomish's request to take official notice of evidence submitted in other proceedings. The records of those proceedings contain thousands of submittals, most of which are case-specific and not relevant to the issues in the instant proceeding; the documents that could be relevant have been submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding.

134. We also deny Morgan Stanley's motion requesting imposition of sanctions on Snohomish. We do not find sanctions warranted in these circumstances.

B. SCWC's Motion to Lodge Oral Argument Exhibits

135. Subsequent to the April 23 oral argument, SCWC filed a motion to lodge the exhibits it presented during oral argument. SCWC contends that the oral argument exhibits should be lodged into the evidentiary record because they clarify certain statements made by SCWC at the April 23

oral argument. In response, Morgan Stanley argue that SCWC's motion should be denied because it does not meet the requirements necessary to reopen the evidentiary record under Rule 716 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.[202]

136. SCWC's motion to lodge the oral argument exhibits is an attempt to reopen the evidentiary record of this proceeding to submit an additional exhibit that represents a new calculation. We are not persuaded that good cause exists to reopen the record. The need for finality in this proceeding outweighs the reasons put forward by Snohomish for reopening the record. Accordingly, we deny SCWC's motion.

C. Snohomish's Motion to Stay

137. On May 30, 2003, Snohomish filed a motion to stay the instant proceeding pending the resolution of the complaint Snohomish filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. In that complaint, Snohomish alleges that two members of the Commission violated the Sunshine Act[203] by conducting a private telephone conference on March 26, 2003. Snohomish's instant motion is based on the same allegations which the Commission rejected in the April 23, 2003 order addressing Snohomish's motion for recusal.[204] Accordingly, we deny Snohomish' request for stay.

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[202] 18 C.F.R. § 385.716 (2003).

[203] 5 U.S.C. § 552(b) (2000).

[204] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 103 FERC 61,080 (2003), reh'g pending.

THE COMMISSION'S ORDERS:

(A) The Initial Decision is affirmed, as discussed in the body of this order.

(B) The complaints are hereby denied.

(C) Snohomish's and Senator Cantwell's requests for rehearing are hereby denied, as discussed in the body of this order.

(D) Snohomish's motion to reopen the record is hereby denied, as discussed in the body of this order.

(E) Snohomish's motion to take official notice is hereby denied in part and granted in part, as discussed in the body of this order.

(F) SCWC's motion to lodge is hereby denied, as discussed in the body of this order.

(G) Snohomish's motion to stay the proceeding is hereby denied, as discussed in the body of this order.

By the Commission.

APPENDIX D

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
ALJ Decisions and Reports

Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company
v.
Enron Power Marketing, Inc.
El Paso Merchant Energy
American Electric Power Services, Corp.
Nevada Power Company
v.
Morgan Stanley Capital Group
Calpine Energy Services
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.
Reliant Energy Services
BP Energy Company
Allegheny Energy Supply Company, L.L.C
Southern California Water Company
v.
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.
Public Utility District No. 1
Snohomish County, Washington
v.
Morgan Stanley Capital Group, Inc.

Docket Nos. EL02-28-004, EL02-28-005, EL02-33-004, EL02-33-005, EL02-38-004, EL02-38-005

Docket Nos. EL02-29-004, EL02-29-005, EL02-30-004, EL02-30-005, EL02-31-004, EL02-32-004, EL02-31-005, EL02-32-005, EL02-34-004, EL02-34-005, EL02-39-004, EL02-39-005

Docket Nos. EL02-43-004, EL02-43-005

Docket Nos. EL02-56-004, EL02-56-005 (Consolidated)

ORDER ON REQUESTS FOR REHEARING AND CLARIFICATION
(Issued November 10, 2003)

1. In this order, we address requests for rehearing and clarification of our June 26, 2003 Order[1] in which we affirmed the Initial Decision[2] by the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) denying complaints filed by Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company (Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific or collectively, Nevada Companies), Southern California Water Company (SCWC), and Public Utility District No. 1 Snohomish County, Washington (Snohomish). The complaints alleged that dysfunctions in the California electricity spot markets caused forward contracts negotiated in the bilateral markets in California, Washington and Nevada, and entered into pursuant to the Western Systems Power Pool (WSPP) Agreement during the period November 1, 2000 through June 20, 2001, to be unjust and unreasonable. The complaints sought a remedy of contract modification. In this order, we deny the requests for rehearing and we reaffirm our conclusion that the record in this proceeding does not support modification of the contracts at issue for the reasons stated below; and address the request for clarification.

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[1] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 103 FERC ¶ 61,353 (2003), *reh'g pending*. (June 26 Order).

[2] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 101 FERC ¶ 63,031 (2002) (Initial Decision).

2. In addition, we will address a request for rehearing of the order issued on April 23, 2003[3] in response to a motion filed by SCWC and Snohomish in which they requested that the Commission disclose alleged prohibited off-the-record communications during a March 26, 2003 press conference attended by three commissioners and a conference call the same day between two commissioners and a group of Wall Street analysts. In this order, we deny the requests for rehearing of the April 23 Order for the reasons stated below.

3. This order is in the public interest because it balances effective rate regulation with respect for the sanctity of contracts, as dictated by the U.S. Supreme Court under the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine.

Background

4. In December 2001, Nevada Companies filed separate complaints against the following entities: Duke Energy Trading and Marketing, L.L.C. (Duke), Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. (Morgan Stanley), Calpine Energy Services, L.P. (Calpine), Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P. (Mirant), Reliant Energy Services, Inc. (Reliant), El Paso Merchant Energy, L.P. (El Paso), BP Energy Company (BP), American Electric Power Service Corporation (AEP), Enron Power Marketing Inc. (Enron), and Allegheny Energy Supply Company, L.L.C. (Allegheny). SCWC filed a complaint against Mirant. In February 2002, Snohomish filed a complaint against Morgan Stanley. The Nevada Companies and SCWC argued that the dysfunctions in the Power Exchange (PX) and Independent System Operator (ISO) spot markets caused long-term

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[3] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, FERC ¶ 61,080 (2003), *reh'g pending*. (April 23 Order).

contracts negotiated in California, Washington, and Nevada to be unjust and unreasonable and, consequently, requested modification of their contracts. Snohomish argued that the term of its contract and the Collateral Annex[4] were unjust and unreasonable. Unlike Nevada Companies and SCWC, Snohomish requested modification of the contract term, not the contract rate.

5. On January 10, 2002, Nevada Companies filed a notice of withdrawal with prejudice of complaint against Duke, explaining that Nevada Companies and Duke reached an agreement to modify their contracts, effective June 4, 2002.

6. On April 11, 2002, the Commission issued an order setting the instant complaints for a trial-type evidentiary hearing.[5] In the April 11 Order, the Commission instructed the ALJ to examine the following issues: (1) whether the challenged contracts should be reviewed under the just and reasonable standard or the more stringent public interest standard of review; and (2) whether the dysfunctional California ISO and PX spot markets adversely affected Western long-term bilateral markets, and if so, whether contract modification is warranted.

7. The hearing on these issues was held from October 7-24, 2002. The Initial Decision was issued on December 19, 2002. In the Initial Decision, the ALJ found that the *Mobile-*

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[4] The Collateral Annex sets forth the conditions under which Snohomish is required to provide collateral, as well as the conditions under which Morgan Stanley will release such collateral.

[5] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 99 FERC ¶ 61,047, *order on reh'g*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,273 (2002), *reh'g pending*. (April 11 Order).

Sierra public interest standard of review[6] applies to the contracts at issue. Furthermore, the ALJ concluded that Complainants failed to satisfy their burden of proof to justify contract modification under the public interest standard.

8. On November 20, 2002, the Commission issued an order allowing parties in the Docket No. EL00-95, *et al.* proceeding to adduce evidence that was either indicative or counter-indicative of market manipulation that may have occurred during the California energy crisis of 2000-2001 (100-Day Discovery Proceeding).[7] The submission of evidence in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding was completed on March 20, 2003.

9. On March 26, 2003, the Commission released the Commission Staff's Final Report on Price Manipulation in Western Markets in Docket No. PA02-2-000 (Staff Report). The Staff Report, among other things, asserted that many spot market trading strategies undertaken by certain sellers were in violation of anti-gaming provisions of the Commission-approved tariffs for the California ISO and PX. Upon Staff's recommendation, the Commission issued certain "show cause" orders requiring the named market participants to respond to market manipulation allegations of the Staff Report. Additionally, the Staff Report addressed the issue of whether the dysfunctional spot market had an impact on the forward prices reflected in long-term power supply contracts. The Staff Report analysis found that spot prices influenced forward prices negotiated during the January 1,

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[6] *See United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Serv. Corp.*, 350 U.S. 332 (1956) (Mobile); *FPC v. Sierra Pacific Power*, 350 U.S. 348 (1956) (Sierra); and *United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Memphis Light, Gas and Water Div.*, 358 U.S. 103 (1958).

[7] *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. Sellers of Energy and Ancillary Serv.*, 101 FERC ¶ 61,186 (2002), *order on clarification and reh'g*, 102 FERC ¶ 61,164 (2003).

2000 through June 21, 2001 crisis period and that the influence was the greatest for contracts with one to two years terms.

10. On June 26, 2003, the Commission issued an order affirming the Initial Decision denying the complaints. In denying the instant complaints, the Commission took into consideration the evidentiary record developed in the instant proceeding, findings of the Staff Report, and evidence submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding. Specifically, the Commission affirmed the Presiding Judge's findings that the applicable standard of review for the contracts at issue was the public interest standard and that the Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof under this standard of review.

11. Furthermore, based on the review of the evidence and the totality of circumstances, the Commission concluded that the Complainants failed to meet their burden of proof under the public interest standard, as defined in past cases. The Commission found that the challenged contracts were not contrary to the public interest because the Complainants failed to demonstrate that the contracts in question caused financial distress for the Complainants so as to threaten their ability to continue service, that the contracts cast an excessive burden on their customers, that the contracts were unduly discriminatory to the detriment of other customers that are not parties to this proceeding, or that any other factors on this record demonstrate that the contracts were contrary to the public interest. The Commission also noted that:

> ... at the time of contract execution, other alternatives were available to the Complainants; however, they chose to enter into the contracts in question, accepting market risks. Complainants benefited from resales of the energy purchased under these contracts during the

> relevant period; however, after the drop in prices in mid-2001, Complainants became dissatisfied with their bargains and sought contract modification. The law is quite clear on that point. The fact that a contract becomes uneconomic over time does not render it contrary to the public interest.[8]

12. The following parties filed timely requests for rehearing of the June 26 Order: SCWC, the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (NPUC), the Office of the Attorney General of the State of Nevada, Bureau of Consumer Protection (NBCP), Nevada Companies, and Snohomish. Allegheny, BP, Calpine, El Paso, Enron, Mirant and Morgan Stanley (collectively, Respondents) also filed a limited request for clarification.

Discussion

Applicable Standard of Review

13. Complainants, NBCP, and NPUC argue that in the June 26 Order, the Commission violated its statutory obligation to ensure just and reasonable rates when it determined that it could impose a higher burden of proof before mitigating unjust and unreasonable prices in the contracts at issue. They state that the Commission can apply the public interest standard to determine whether prices should be mitigated only after it finds that the contract prices at issue here are just and reasonable. NPUC and Complainants state that the contract prices at issue were not just and reasonable at the contract formation because, as determined in the Staff Report, the California PX and ISO spot market dysfunctions adversely affected prices in forward contracts, and the Respondents engaged in fraud,

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[8] *See* June 26 Order at 62,384.

deception and misrepresentation, and market manipulation, resulting in unjust and unreasonable prices. Complainants and NPUC conclude that the forward markets were not competitive during the relevant time and thus could not produce just and reasonable prices. Snohomish adds that pursuant to the Commission precedent, contracts can be modified under the public interest standard where, as here, the contracts were negotiated during a period of market dysfunction and, after the Commission intervention to correct that market dysfunction, the contracts were no longer economical.

14. In addition, Nevada Companies and SCWC argue that the Commission misread the holding in *Sierra* when it found that "[u]nder the 'public interest' standard, to justify contract modification it is not enough to show that forward prices became unjust and unreasonable due to the impact of spot market dysfunctions; it must be shown that the rates, terms, and conditions are contrary to the public interest."[9] According to the Nevada Companies, under the Commission's interpretation of *Sierra*, as long as two parties reach a voluntary agreement on a contract price, the Commission is powerless to modify that price even if it finds it to be unjust and unreasonable.

15. As discussed below, the Commission has not violated its statutory obligation with respect to modification of contracts, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court. The *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine holds that in cases "where parties have negotiated a... contract that sets firm prices... and that denies either party the right to change such prices [] unilaterally, [the Commission] may abrogate or modify the contract only if the public interest so requires."[10] Under the

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[9] *See* June 26 Order at 62,397.

[10] *Texaco, Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F.3d 1091, 1095 (D.C. Cir. 1998).

public interest standard, the sole concern of the Commission is whether the challenged rate adversely affects the public interest,[11] and the Commission can exercise its authority to modify contracts only where the public interest demands such action.[12] The burden to demonstrate that the contract rates in question in this proceeding are contrary to the public interest is on the Complainants. The Complainants in this proceeding, however, have failed to make such a showing. As established in the June 26 Order and affirmed in this order on rehearing, the contracts at issue are subject to the public interest standard of review. Once a party signs a *Mobile-Sierra* contract, it cannot escape by later claiming that the rates were not just and reasonable when it signed the contract, unless there is evidence such as the seller fraudulently inducing the buyer to execute the contract. However, no such evidence was found in the evidentiary record, including the Staff Report and the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding submittals.

16. In response to the Complainants' arguments that the Commission can apply the public interest standard of review only after it finds that the contract rates were just and reasonable, Complainants fail to acknowledge that the contracts were lawfully entered into pursuant to prior findings and authorization by the Commission under Section 205 of the Federal Power Act (FPA).[13] Upon a showing that the seller lacks or has mitigated market power in the relevant market, the Commission pre-determines under Section 205 of the FPA that sales at market-based rates will be just and

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[11] *FPC v. Sierra Pacific Power Co.*, 350 U.S. 348, 354-5 (1956).

[12] *Union Pacific Fuels, Inc.*, 129 F.3d 157, 161 (D.C. Cir. 1997) (quoting *Metropolitan Edison Co. v. FERC*, 595 F.2d 851, 856 n.29 (D.C. Cir. 1979).

[13] 16 U.S.C. § 824d (2000).

reasonable.[14] In effect, the Commission makes a "blanket" just and reasonable determination which applies to subsequent market-based sales made by the seller. As we explained in our June 26 Order, if we were required to examine every long-term service agreement as if the seller was seeking new market-based rate authority, it would make the original grant of authority a pointless exercise of no value to anyone.

17. The Commission has held that this grant of market-based rate authority constitutes what is known as the "initial review" of rates in the cost-based rate context. Then, if the parties have not agreed to apply the public interest standard to future challenges, a party may come to the Commission pursuant to Section 206 of the FPA[15] and demonstrate that the rate is no longer just and reasonable. Alternatively, a party who does not have such a right may seek changes by demonstrating that the contract rate is contrary to the public interest. In essence, the Complainants attempt to add another layer to this two-step process, claiming that parties to contracts that are subject to the public interest standard of review should have another opportunity to argue that the rate was not just and reasonable at the outset. This argument, however, has no support in either the statute or the relevant Commission or Court precedent. Indeed, the Complainants' suggested approach would create uncertainty in the market, as a party who suddenly finds that its deal has become uneconomical, can undo the terms to which it was contractually bound. This is precisely what the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine was designed to avoid, and we see no support for an exception to this established doctrine simply because a party has contracted in a market-based rate regime.

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[14] *Louisiana Power Authority v. FERC*, 141 F.3d 364, 365 (D.C. Cir. 1998); *Elizabethtown Gas Co. v. FERC*, 10 F.3d 866, 870 (D.C. Cir. 1993).

[15] 16 U.S.C. § 824e (2000).

18. Our decision in *Lockyer*[16] supports this result. The "view that only cost-based or formula rate models satisfy the statutory framework fundamentally misapprehends the Commission's ratemaking authority."[17] *Lockyer* held that market-based rate certificates satisfy the FPA Section 205(c)[18] requirement that rates be on file with the Commission and recognized that the Commission reviews the reasonableness of the use of market-based rates prior to their effectiveness. "Prior review consists, however, not of the particular prices agreed to by willing buyers and sellers. Rather, it consists of analysis to assure that the seller lacks or has mitigated market power so that its prices will fall within a zone of reasonableness."[19]

19. Thus, at the time sellers are granted market-based rate certificates, their rates are subject to the initial review required by the FPA. This review is different than that conducted for cost-based rates because "[t]he availability of genuine alternatives provides a sufficient basis... to conclude that 'market discipline' will be sufficient to keep the prices that sellers charge within the statutorily-prescribed just and reasonable zone."[20] We reject the parties' argument that this approach is insufficient to satisfy the statute. Our decision in *Lockyer* is on all fours with our finding here.

20. Respondents seek clarification that the public interest standard of review does not authorize unjust and

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[16] *State of California ex re Lockyer v. British Columbia Power Exchange Corp, et al.*, 99 FERC ¶ 61,247 (2002) (Lockyer).

[17] *Id.* at 62,062.

[18] 16 U.S.C. § 824d(c) (2000).

[19] *Id.* at 61,247. 62,063.

[20] *Id.*

unreasonable rates. We clarify as follows. Respondents are correct that rates initially must be just and reasonable. For market-based rates, this determination is made when the authorization for market-based rates is granted. However, if rates subsequently become unjust and unreasonable and the contract at issue is subject to the *Mobile-Sierra* standard of review, the Commission under court precedent may not change the contract simply because it is no longer just and reasonable. If parties' market-based rate contracts provide for the public interest standard of review, the Commission is bound to a higher burden to support modification of such contracts. The public interest standard applies to changes to contract rates and "represents the Supreme Court's attempt to strike a balance between private contractual rights and the regulatory power to modify contracts when necessary to protect the public interest."[21] Our finding that changes to the challenged contracts should be evaluated under the public interest standard does not equate to a finding that the underlying rates are not just and reasonable. To the extent Respondents request for clarification asks the Commission to opine on matters not before us in this case, we decline to do so.

21. Complainants further argue that the Commission erred in finding that the public interest standard of review is applicable under Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement.[22] In particular, they state that the Commission failed to provide explanation for its decision, while disregarding Nevada

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[21] *Northeast Util. Serv. Co., v FERC*, 55 F.3d 686, 689 (1st Cir. 1995).

[22] Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement states in part as follows: "Nothing contained herein shall be construed as affecting in any way the rights of the Parties to jointly make application to FERC for a change in the rates and charges, classification, service, terms, or conditions affecting WSPP transactions under Section 205 of the Federal Power Act and pursuant to FERC rules and regulations promulgated thereunder..."

Companies' and SCWC's witness testimony that they did not intend to bargain away their rights under Section 206 of the FPA.

22. Parties' testimonies and other evidence (such as recordings of trader telephone conversations) provided no indication that the issue of the applicable standard of review was ever mentioned by either Complainants or their counterparties at the time the contracts at issue were negotiated and executed. The burden was on the Complainants to prove that the intent of the parties was to allow for Complainants to make unilateral changes to the terms of the contracts in question. Complainants failed to present any evidence on this issue. For this reason, in our decision, we affirmed the Presiding Judge's finding that:

> ...the reference to a "joint" Section 205 filing evidences an intent that neither seller nor buyer be able to seek changes under Section 205 or 206 of the FPA other than under the "public interest" standard of review. Although the parties could have used specific language disallowing a unilateral filing by the seller under Section 205, or the filing of a complaint by the buyer under Section 206 of the FPA, the most reasonable reading of Section 6.1 is that they intended to exclude any unilateral filings at the Commission.[23]

23. SCWC and Snohomish argue that Section 6.1 does not apply to individual transactions under the WSPP Agreement. In their opinion, it only applies to adding or removing Service Schedules under the WSPP Agreement.

24. We disagree. The relevant language in Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement explicitly refers to possible changes in

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[23] *See* June 26 Order at 62,388.

the rates, charges, classification, service, terms, or conditions for transactions entered into pursuant to the WSPP Agreement, and not just Service Schedules appearing in the last part of the WSPP Agreement. In particular, Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement states in pertinent part as follows:

> ...Nothing contained herein shall be construed as affecting in any way the rights of the Parties to jointly make application to FERC for a change in the rates and charges, classification, service, terms, or conditions affecting WSPP transactions under Section 205 of the Federal Power Act and pursuant to FERC rules and regulations promulgated thereunder... (*Emphasis added*).

25. In addition, Respondents ask the Commission to clarify that in the absence of explicit contractual language allowing unilateral contract modifications under Section 206 of the FPA, the party seeking change must meet the public interest standard. As we explained in the Rehearing Order,[24] "the evidentiary hearing was established to interpret Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement and to ascertain the intent of the parties at the time the contracts in question were signed."[25] In the June 26 Order, based on the evidence developed at the hearing and the Presiding Judge's conclusions, we determined that "the parties to the challenged contracts did not intend to retain for Complainants the right to unilaterally seek changes to their contracts."[26] Thus, we concluded that the Complainants must meet the burden of proof under the public interest standard of review to justify modification of the contracts.

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[24] *Nevada Power Co. and Sierra Pacific Power Co. v. Enron Power Marketing, Inc., et al.*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,273 (2002) (Rehearing Order).

[25] *Id.* at 62,047.

[26] *See* June 26 Order at 62,388.

26. Nevada Companies, however, argue that pursuant to *Union Pacific*,[27] the parties' failure to explicitly address the issue of the applicable standard of review signifies the parties' intent to apply the just and reasonable standard of review. *Union Pacific* is inapposite in the instant circumstances. First, the contracts at issue in *Union Pacific* contained a so-called *Memphis*[28] clause allowing unilateral contract changes. Second, the issue in *Union Pacific* was whether or not the Commission acting *sua sponte* is bound by the public interest standard. The Court in *Union Pacific* distinguished between restrictions on the contracting parties' rights to unilaterally change rates and the Commission's right to modify contractual rates. The Court thus concluded that absent explicit language limiting the Commission's authority to modify the contract, the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine is inapplicable to rate changes initiated by the Commission.

27. NPUC also argues that the appropriate standard of review for the contracts at issue is the just and reasonable standard and that the Commission set the public interest standard as the default standard for contract modification when parties are silent on the standard of review in their agreements, which contradicts court and Commission precedent. NPUC's contention is incorrect. We set the issue of the applicable standard of review for hearing to determine the intent of the parties. Consequently, our decision in the June 26 Order rests on the testimony and the Presiding Judge's conclusions interpreting the intent of the parties, as reflected in Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement.

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[27] *Union Pacific Fuels, Inc. v. FERC*, 129 F.3d 157 (D.C. Cir. 1997).

[28] *See United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division, et al.*, 358 U.S. 103 (1958).

28. SCWC further argues that *Texaco*[29] cited in the June 26 Order is also inapposite in the instant case because the WSPP Agreement is not a fixed-rate contract addressed in *Texaco*. SCWC(s contention is without merit. Confirmation Agreements at issue here have a fixed price. Section 38 of the WSPP Agreement cited by SCWC in support of its position requires the parties to the WSPP Agreement to specify a floating price when they intend that the price for a transaction be based on an index. Moreover, the Court in *Texaco* held that the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine applies regardless of whether parties to a contract agreed to a specific rate or whether they agreed to a rate changeable in a specific manner. [30]

29. Snohomish and NBCP also contend that the application of the *Mobile-Sierra* public interest standard of review to market-based rate contracts is inappropriate and contrary to law. We addressed this issue in the June 26 Order on pages 62,388-89, paragraph 37. In response to the contention that the public interest standard does not apply to the market-based rate contracts at issue here because these contracts have not been previously reviewed and accepted for filing by the Commission, we stated that:

> The need for prior Commission review in these circumstances was met when, after determining that the Respondents lacked market power or had taken steps to mitigate it, the Commission authorized all of the Respondents in this proceeding to make sales of power at market-based rates. A seller that has been granted market-based rate authority may enter into power sales contracts without first seeking Commission authorization of the provisions of an

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[29] *See Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F. 3d 1091 (D.C. Cir. 1998).

[30] *See id.* at 1096.

> individual contract (except for certain affiliate contracts). The Commission is not required specifically to review each agreement since the Commission, when it grants umbrella market-based rate authorization, pre-determines that rates under future contracts entered into pursuant to the market-based rate authorization will be just and reasonable. The "just and reasonable" standard of Section 205(e) of the FPA is satisfied by the Commission's determination that the utility (and its affiliates) lacks market power or has taken sufficient steps to mitigate market power. As noted in *GWF Energy, LLC*,[31] if we were required to examine every long-term service agreement as if the seller was seeking new market-based rate authority, it would make the original grant of market-based rate authority (*i.e.*, the original acceptance of the market-based rate tariff) a pointless exercise of no value to anyone. (*Footnotes omitted*).

30. In addition, Snohomish argues that the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine applies only in situations where a regulated utility is challenging a contract with a rate it argues is too low. As we stated in the June 26 Order on page 62,384, paragraph 7, "[i]n later cases, the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine was applied to contracts containing rates that allegedly were too high." Snohomish, however, believes that the *PSC of New York*[32] case the Commission relied on is inapposite. We disagree. The Court in *PSC of New York* held that the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine protects contracts, not rates; it obligates both buyers and sellers, and the Commission is no more at liberty to alter a contract "to the prejudice of the producers than to do so in

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[31] *See GWF Energy, LLC, et al.*, 98 FERC ¶ 61,330, at 62,390 (2002).

[32] *See, e.g., Public Service Commission of the State of New York v. FPC*, 543 F.2d 757 (D.C. Cir. 1974) (PSC of New York).

their favor."[33] In addition, the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine has been applied in other cases where a complainant sought to reduce the existing rate.[34]

31. Snohomish further argues that the Commission should have reviewed the contracts at issue under the just and reasonable standard to protect the rights of third parties, specifically, Snohomish's ratepayers who intervened in this case. In addition, Snohomish, NBCP, and NPUC contend that the Commission at the very least should have applied the flexible public interest standard.[35]

32. As we stated in the June 26 Order on page 62,389, paragraph 41, "[t]here is no Commission or court precedent that supports a finding that a non-signatory party may challenge a *Mobile-Sierra* contract under the 'just and reasonable' standard of review, as opposed to the 'public interest' standard of review." The cases cited by Snohomish as dictating application of the just and reasonable standard of review are inapposite. In *PJM Interconnection, LLC*,[36] the Reliability Assurance Agreement explicitly permitted PJM to submit filings under Section 206 of the FPA.[37] In the instant proceeding, the contract in question does not contain such a provision. Snohomish also cites to *Carolina Power and Light Co.*,[38] which involved a Commission directive to revise a settlement agreement that had been submitted for

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[33] *Id.* at 798.

[34] *See, e.g., Potomac Electric Power Company v. FERC*, 210 F.3d 403 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

[35] They cite to *Northeast Utilities Service Co.*, 66 FERC ¶ 61,332 (1994).

[36] *PJM Interconnection, LLC*, 96 FERC ¶ 61,206 (2001).

[37] *See id.* at 61,878 n.12.

[38] *Carolina Power and Light Co.*, 69 FERC ¶ 61,078 (1994).

Commission acceptance, and not, as in this case, a complaint challenging an existing market-based rate contract for the sale of power. Finally, Snohomish refers to *Pennsylvania Electric Co.*,[39] which speaks in general terms about the Commission's statutory duty to ensure just and reasonable rates. However, the Commission has applied the public interest standard to challenges brought by non-contractual parties.[40] In addition, we found no basis for applying a more flexible public interest standard to the contracts at issue. The record shows that the third-party intervenors, *i.e.*, Snohomish's retail ratepayers, were not adversely affected by the contract at issue. As we found in the June 26 Order:

> The Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract is no more than five percent of Snohomish's portfolio costs and constitutes only three percent of Snohomish's load, resulting in an eight percent increase over 2001 rates, while other contracts account for rate increase of fifty-one percent. Moreover, Snohomish's rate increase occurred prior to Snohomish's negotiating its contract with Morgan Stanley, and prior to issuing the RFP for the power purchase in question. (*Footnotes omitted*).[41]

33. Similarly, the Nevada Companies failed to show that the contracts at issue imposed an excessive burden on their ratepayers.

34. Nevada Companies further argue that the holding in the June 26 Order contradicts the approach taken by the

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[39] *Pennsylvania Electric Co. v. FERC*, 11 F3d 207 (D.C. Cir. 1993).

[40] *See, e.g., Public Utility Commission of the State of California v. Sellers of Long Term Contracts, et al.*,100 FERC ¶ 61,098, at 61,396 (2002).

[41] *See* June 26 Order 62,398.

Commission in its Proposed Policy Statement.[42] Under the Proposed Policy Statement, unless a contract contains the proposed language, the just and reasonable standard of review would apply to the contract. If adopted, the Policy Statement will apply on the prospective basis only, specifically, to contracts entered into 30 days after the date of issuance of the Final Policy Statement. Numerous parties filed comments to the Proposed Policy Statement raising various issues. The Commission is currently reviewing all of the comments.

35. Snohomish argues that Section 39B in its contract with Morgan Stanley[43] bars unilateral changes affecting only rates for service, while Snohomish challenges the term of the contract in this proceeding. We addressed this issue in the June 26 Order on page 62,389, paragraph 39. Specifically, we stated that:

> In a contract entered into pursuant to market-based rate authority, the negotiated term is intricately linked to the contract rate. The primary basis for Snohomish's complaint is the allegation that the rate in its contract with Morgan Stanley is unjust and unreasonable, not that the term of the contract is unjustifiably long.

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[42] *Standard of Review for Proposed Changes of Market-Based Rate Contracts for Wholesale Sales of Electric Energy by Public Utilities*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,145 (2002).

[43] Section 39B of the Confirmation Agreement between Snohomish and Morgan Stanley states: "The rates for service specified in this Agreement shall remain in effect for the term of this Agreement and shall not be subject to change through application to FERC pursuant to the provisions of Section 205 or 206 of the Federal Power Act."

Challenges to the Findings Involving the Sierra Three-Prong Test

36. On the question of whether the Nevada Companies' contracts imposed an excessive burden on their customers, NBPC acknowledges that the retail rates decreased, but argues that the Nevada Companies' customers paid significantly more than they would have if the prices had been reasonable. However, Complainants failed to produce record evidence on the effect of the contracts at issue on Nevada Companies' customers.

37. SCWC argues that the Commission erred in finding that the SCWC-Mirant contract's effect on SCWC retail customers was minimal. According to SCWC, its ratepayers have seen an overall 38 percent increase in their electric bills. As a result of this rate increase, as approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), SCWC was allowed to recover a portion of the costs of the Mirant contract up to a weighted average cost of energy of $77/MWh.

38. In the June 26 Order, we stated:

> SCWC offered no evidence showing that the challenged contracts impose an excessive burden on its customers. The record evidence establishes that there was no rate increase for SCWC's ratepayers who are permanent residents of SCWC's service territory pursuant to the terms of the settlement between SCWC and CPUC. Under the terms of the settlement, the other group of SCWC's ratepayers, owners of second homes in SCWC's service area, were to face an average monthly electric bill of $35.13. (*Footnotes omitted*).[44]

[44] *See* June 26 Order at 62,398.

The bottom line for the public interest test is not the percentage increase as compared to prior rates. The public interest test requires a showing that the contract places an excessive burden on ratepayers sufficient to modify the contract. SCWC has not shown how a $35.13 monthly electric bill amounts to an excessive burden on the ratepayers. Moreover, the weighted average cost of energy of $77/MWh, which SCWC cites as a compelling piece of evidence, is only $3 more than the $74 advisory benchmark that SCWC believes would be a just and reasonable price for its contract with Mirant.

39. Snohomish also disagrees with the Commission's conclusion that its contract with Morgan Stanley did not impose an excessive burden on its ratepayers. Snohomish does not challenge the Commission's finding that "[t]he Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract is no more than five percent of Snohomish's portfolio costs [] and constitutes only three percent of Snohomish's load, resulting in an eight percent increase over 2001 rates, while other contracts account for rate increase of fifty-one percent []."[45] However, Snohomish argues that the five percent threshold is arbitrary. Snohomish also provides the amounts representing the burden imposed on Snohomish's ratepayers by the contract in question.

40. In our decision on this issue, we relied on the following record evidence. The Morgan Stanley contract resulted in an eight percent increase over 2001 rates, while other Snohomish contracts account for a rate increase of fifty-one percent. Moreover, Snohomish's rate increase occurred prior to Snohomish's negotiating its contract with

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[45] *See id.*

Morgan Stanley, and prior to issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the power purchase in question.[46]

41. Snohomish further argues that the Commission's finding that Snohomish started the RFP process after the Snohomish Board authorized the retail rate increase is a *non sequitur*. According to Snohomish, the rate increase approval was directly related to the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract because the rate increase allowed Snohomish to pay the exorbitant cost of the contract in question.

42. Snohomish's Board approved the rate increase on December 13, 2000,[47] while Snohomish issued the RFP on December 22, 2000.[48] In other words, the rate increase took place prior to the initiation of the RFP process. We do not see the causal link between the contract in question and the rate increase, since the latter preceded even the solicitation of power.

43. Similarly, Snohomish challenges the Commission's determination that Snohomish failed to present evidence that its contract with Morgan Stanley was unduly discriminatory to the detriment of other purchasers who are not parties to the contract at issue. Snohomish contends that the Commission ignored evidence demonstrating that the contract has produced devastating consequences for electric customers in Snohomish County.

44. We are aware that Snohomish's retail rates are higher than the historical average; however, as we stated above,

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[46] *Id.*

[47] Ex. SNO-1 at 4:19-5:2; Tr. at 1720-23; 1724.

[48] Ex. MSC-8 at 3-4; Tr. 1735, 1737.

there is no evidence in the record that the rate hike was caused by the contract at issue.

The Commission's $74/MWh Advisory Benchmark

45. Complainants also argue that the Commission failed to offer any justification for upholding the contract prices in excess of its $74/MWh benchmark price.

46. Complainants refer to our December 15, 2000 Order[49] in which we declined to extend the California spot market mitigation measures to forward markets.[50] In that order, we also adopted an advisory benchmark of $74/MWh for five-year contracts for supply around-the-clock to be used as a reference point in addressing any complaints regarding the pricing of contracts negotiated in forward markets. While we expected that the benchmark would be helpful in assessing possible complaints challenging forward prices, we never suggested that a contractual price exceeding the benchmark would be all by itself a sufficient ground for abrogating a contract. Quite to the contrary, we expected that "buyers may elect to negotiate above [the benchmark] to the extent they believe the particular contract or supplier brings value which suits their needs (*e.g.* shorter-term contracts, favorable terms and conditions, assignment of the risk of variable cost exposure, the particular characteristics of the supplier or its resource portfolio, etc.)."[51]

47. The record in this case shows that the SCWC contract provides a significant benefit, which SCWC emphasized when testifying before the CPUC. Energy is typically traded

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[49] *San Diego Gas and Electric Co. v. Sellers of Energy and Ancillary Services*, 93 FERC ¶ 61,294 (2000).

[50] *Id.* at 61,994.

[51] *Id.* at 61,995.

in 25-MW blocks, and Mirant took on the risk of supplying SCWC with a 15-MW (odd lot) sale. SCWC recognized in its CPUC testimony that a 15 MW block of energy should carry (a slight pricing premium.)[52] A reliable supply of firm energy was particularly important to SCWC, since it had no resources of its own. Mirant(s contract offered greater capacity-like reliability benefits than a unit-specific contract. A unit-specific contract would have resulted in too much system unreliability for such a small system.[53] Moreover, SCWC's RFP never specified a target price of $74/MWh and there is no record evidence that any representative from SCWC told Mirant that it sought a price of $74/MWh.[54]

48. Similarly, the record shows that Snohomish did not specify in its RFP the target price of $74/MWh. Quite to the contrary, Snohomish was specifically authorized by its Board to enter into a contract with a price as high as $125/MWh.

49. Moreover, for comparison purposes, the advisory benchmark cannot be taken at face value. The $74/MWh advisory benchmark represents a suggested price for five-year contracts for supply around-the-clock, whereas all Nevada Companies' contracts are for 12 months or shorter for standard on-peak 6x16 blocks of power. Nevada Companies failed to provide any calculations adjusting the $74/MWh benchmark to reflect the terms of their specific contracts. As a result, neither the Presiding Judge nor the Commission had any evidence on which to assess the Complainants' arguments regarding the relationship of the challenged contract prices to the advisory benchmark.

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[52] Ex. MAEM-30 at JAD-10-11.

[53] *Id.*

[54] *See* Initial Decision at 65,307 n.444.

50. Furthermore, Complainants argue that the Commission, while providing relief to purchasers in the California spot market, reneged its promise to assess complaints regarding the justness and reasonableness of prices in forward bilateral contracts executed during the time the spot market was dysfunctional. SCWC adds that, in accordance with the December 15 Order, it believed that the price in its contract with Mirant would be modified if proved to be unjust and unreasonable.

51. These contentions are without merit. The December 15 Order never mandated the application of the (just and reasonable(standard of review to forward contracts. Under the "public interest(standard applicable to the SCWC-Mirant contract, SCWC was required to show that the contract price at issue is contrary to the public interest, which it failed to do.

Totality of Circumstances

52. Nevada Companies and NBCP state that in its analysis of the "totality of circumstances," the Commission inappropriately focused on the Complainants' buying practices and ignored many other factors. Nevada Companies argue that whether they had other alternatives is irrelevant to the issues in this case. Furthermore, they contend that the alternatives available at the time of formation of the contracts were not true alternatives because Nevada Companies were prohibited by the state law from entering into any contracts with a term longer than three years.

53. The availability of other alternatives and the Complainants (buying practices are indicative of circumstances under which the transactions in question were

executed. The availability of more competitively priced products demonstrates that the Complainants were not induced to enter into the transactions at issue. They were free to reject offers that led to execution of the contracts in question, and turn to other suppliers. In response to Nevada Companies(contention that it was prohibited to enter into contracts with a term longer than three years, we note that all of the contracts at issue here are 12 months or shorter, even though (according to the Nevada Companies) the state law allowed contracts up to three years long.

54. Snohomish also argues that it did not have any meaningful alternatives at the time the contract was executed. According to Snohomish, the Western forward market was illiquid; the response rate to its RFP was very low; and two of the five bidders that responded refused to offer the firm, around-the-clock, quality of power service needed to serve Snohomish's customers reliably. The three remaining bids, Snohomish continues, were not meaningful alternatives either because they did not offer supply of sufficient quantity. Furthermore, Snohomish argues that contrary to the Commission's finding in the June 26 Order, it was never offered shorter-term contracts.

55. The record shows that Snohomish had an option of executing a contract for a shorter term than its contract with Morgan Stanley or entering into two separate agreements with a total term of the challenged contract. Specifically, one of the alternative bids from Morgan Stanley provided for power for periods of one, two or three years with gradually decreasing prices, respectively.[55] Morgan Stanley also offered Snohomish to enter into an alternative arrangement of two separate deals, one for five years (at above market prices) and another for five-seven years (at below market

[55] Tr. 1735, MSC-10.

prices).[56] Snohomish rejected either of these alternatives. Instead, Snohomish chose to pass the risk of price volatility to Morgan Stanley and pay a below market rate of $105 for the first several years, even if the contract had to be for a longer term. Snohomish expected, based on its forward curve dated April 2001, that its contract with Morgan Stanley would provide Snohomish with power at a price far below market for at least two years.[57]

56. SCWC also takes issue with the Commission's determination that it had alternatives to the Mirant contract. It agrees with the Commission's finding that, in response to its RFP, it received three different proposals with varying options. However, according to SCWC, none of these responses were acceptable because they were tainted by the dysfunctions in the spot market.

57. The record shows that the price and the term of the contract SCWC is now challenging were consistent with SCWC's RFP, which contained a target price of $90/MWh and requested bids for one-to-seven year contracts.[58] SCWC issued the RFP to only six suppliers,[59] and as a result, received three responses containing varying options.[60] SCWC chose the contract terms suggested by Mirant. Even though the contract price offered by Mirant was slightly higher that the RFP target price, it was accepted by SCWC because, as recognized by SCWC in its testimony to CPUC,

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[56] Tr. 3992-93.

[57] Ex. MSC-37 at 22:22-23:3, Ex. MSC-50.

[58] Tr. 2900-02 and Ex. MAEM-2 at 13; MAEM-9; Tr. 2901:1-4, 2903:3-7; and 2904-5; Ex. SCW-4 at 12; SCW-1 at 12:5-10:24:10-12.

[59] Tr. 2893:19-2894:20; Ex. SCW-1 at 17:1-8.

[60] Tr. 2894:21-24; 2944:10-17.

a 15 MW block of energy should carry a slight pricing premium.[61]

58. SCWC further challenges the Commission's finding that "it was SCWC's choice to wait until March 2001 when the energy prices were at their peak to start a bid solicitation process to replace its contract with Dynegy Inc. that was to expire in May 2001."[62] SCWC states that it could not have forecasted that in March 2001 prices would be at their peak because there was no information at the time to support such forecast. SCWC adds that it started the RFP process seven weeks prior to expiration of its previous contract with Dynegy Inc., which is, in SCWC's opinion, a reasonable time beforehand.

59. We made the challenged finding based on the record, which shows that in October 2000, after a summer of high prices, SCWC rejected an offer by Dynegy Inc. to extend its contract with SCWC on a "blend and extend" rate of between $46.50/MWh to $54.50/MWh, depending on the length of the proposed contract.[63] At that time, SCWC knew that the prices had risen substantially above the historical levels, and were well above the $35.50/MWh price in its one-year contract with Dynegy Inc. However, SCWC failed to act to secure supply until March 2001 when the prices were at their peak.

60. SCWC further argues that while it is true that the SCWC-Mirant contract did not impose a financial burden on SCWC, the Commission was wrong to determine that SCWC derived profit from its sale of energy back to Mirant. SCWC

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[61] Ex. MAEM-30.

[62] *See* June 26 Order at 62,399.

[63] *See* Ex. MAEM-16 at 21:6-22:2, MAEM-24, and MAEM-25.

contends that the money received from Mirant was credited to SCWC(s retail customers.

61. We do not see how this fact should change the outcome of our analysis in the June 26 Order. The burden was on SCWC to show that SCWC and its retail customers suffered financial hardship as a result of its contract with Mirant. SCWC also agrees on rehearing that the SCWC-Mirant contract did not impose a financial burden on SCWC.[64]

62. SCWC further contends that the Commission(s finding that by entering into the contract with Mirant, SCWC avoided the risk of price volatility and achieved rate certainty(is irrelevant because that is the effect of any fixed-rate forward contract, by definition.

63. The record shows that SCWC was willing to enter into a contract of a considerable length in order to secure the price it wanted.[65] The record evidence also establishes that SCWC agreed to the contract in spite of the fact that it did not expect high prices to persist for long due to a number of things, such as California streamlining authorizations for new generation; demand shifts from spot to forward markets; *etc.*[66] Thus, SCWC chose to avoid price volatility by shifting the risks on to Mirant. However, after the spot market prices fell below the level SCWC expected, SCWC became dissatisfied with the bargain.

64. Furthermore, Snohomish argues that the June 26 Order suggests two contradictory tests for meeting the

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[64] *See* SCWC's Rehearing Request at 74.

[65] *See* Initial Decision at 65,307.

[66] *Id.*

burden of proof under the public interest standard of review. According to Snohomish, these tests are the *Sierra* three-prong test and the requirement to show market manipulation specific to the contracts at issue, as well as "unfairness, bad faith, or duress during the original negotiations." In the alternative, Snohomish and Nevada Companies argue that their contracts were the product of market manipulation by Enron, Morgan Stanley and other Respondents, which, as established by the Commission Staff, engaged in market manipulation. NPUC and NBCP add that the June 26 Order contradicts the Commission's findings regarding two Enron power marketers, which were found by the Commission to have manipulated spot markets.

65. We disagree. In the June 26 Order, we did not create two different public interest tests. Our statement that "there [was] nothing in the record before the ALJ, in the Staff Final Report, or in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding evidence to support a finding that there was market manipulation *specific to* the long-term contracts at issue here" was in response to the Complainants contention that contract modification is warranted based on the Staff Report findings and the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding allegations of manipulation in the spot market. We reviewed the Staff Report findings and evidence submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding and found no evidence to support a finding of market manipulation that specifically affected the contracts at issue.

66. SCWC and Snohomish also challenge the Commission's finding that "because there is no evidence of unfairness, bad faith, or duress in the original negotiations, the Complainants are not entitled to change their bargains." In SCWC's opinion, this finding is outside the scope of the hearing. Snohomish contends that the showing of unfairness, bad faith, or duress is not required to meet the public interest standard.

67. We disagree. In the April 11 Order, we instructed the Presiding Judge to consider and the parties to submit evidence on the totality of purchases and sales and the conditions present at the time the contracts were entered into. As we stated in the Rehearing Order, the instructions were tailored to "assist the judge in focusing on the main issue that the hearing is intended to resolve."[67] Whereas "unfairness, bad faith, or duress in the original negotiations" were not explicitly mentioned, such evidence could be relevant to the conditions present at the time of contract formation and whether the Commission should uphold or modify the challenged contracts. Moreover, as we stated in the Rehearing Order, the list of evidentiary requirements was not exclusive; the parties were free to offer other evidence deemed by the Presiding Judge to be relevant to the Commission-prescribed scope of the hearing.[68]

68. In response to Snohomish's contention, we believe that a showing of fraud, duress, or bad faith between the parties at the contract formation stage could be an alternative ground for modifying the challenged contracts. Our review of a broader range of evidence concerning the circumstances surrounding formation of the contracts at issue imposed no harm on the Complainants. However, the Complainants failed to make this showing; they also failed to meet the *Sierra* three-prong test or demonstrate the contract abrogation is justified based on the totality of circumstances.

69. Snohomish further argues that the evidentiary record contains evidence of duress and exercise of market power by Morgan Stanley. According to Snohomish, Morgan Stanley was aware of Snohomish's need to conclude the transactions

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[67] *See* Rehearing Order at 62,048.

[68] *Id.*

as soon as possible and that Snohomish had no other suppliers to turn to. In Snohomish's opinion, the fact that Morgan Stanley refreshed offer prices constitutes a compelling evidence of an exercise of market power. Snohomish adds that Snohomish was afforded by Morgan Stanley very little time to review the proposed contract.

70. The evidentiary record does not support Snohomish's allegations. The record demonstrates that Snohomish required Morgan Stanley to submit its bid twice with modified terms suggested by Snohomish.[69] Snohomish was represented by counsel during the negotiations of the contract.[70] Snohomish dictated the deadlines to complete negotiations and several of the contract terms.[71] The evidence also demonstrates that, shortly after Snohomish entered into the contract, it stated to its customers that the Morgan Stanley and other forward contracts (give [it] a lot of security against the uncertainty of market fluctuations,) and that the contracts insulate the ratepayers from market volatility.[72]

71. In addition, Nevada Companies and Snohomish further contend that the Commission erred in relying in its decision on *PEPCO* in which the court held that a showing of "a mere rate disparity or a benefit to the purchasing utility or its customers for a rate modification does not suffice, without more, to satisfy [the 'public interest'] standard."[73] In Nevada Companies' and Snohomish's opinion, *PEPCO*

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[69] Tr. at 1743:20-1744:5; 1752-53; 3984-85; Ex. MSC-8 at 10.

[70] Ex. MSC-55 at 7:21-23.

[71] Tr. at 1762:15-17; 1762:18-22.

[72] Ex. MSC-83 at 6; Ex. MSC-78 at 7:10-12.

[73] *See Potomac Electric Power Company v. FERC*, 210 F.3d 403, 404 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

and the instant case are factually different and thus *PEPCO* is inapplicable.

72. In deciding whether the Complainants met their burden of proof under the public interest standard of review, we were guided by the court case law developed over several decades. Upon the review of the evidentiary record developed in this proceeding, the findings of the Staff Report, and evidence submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding, we concluded that the challenged contracts were not contrary to the public interest because the Complainants failed to demonstrate that the contracts in question caused financial distress for the Complainants so as to threaten their ability to continue service, that the contracts cast an excessive burden on their customers, that the contracts were unduly discriminatory to the detriment of other customers that were not parties to this proceeding, or that any other factors in the record of this proceeding demonstrated that the contracts were contrary to the public interest.[74]

Snohomish's Motion to Reopen the Record

73. Further Snohomish argues that it was denied an opportunity to address and/or rebut conclusions set forth in the Staff Report and the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding. In deciding this case, the Commission considered the Staff Report findings and the evidence submitted in the 100-Day Discovery Proceeding upon the Complainants' request. When Snohomish requested the Commission to take official notice of these two proceedings, it was well aware that findings and allegations in these proceedings were contested. We, however, agreed to consider evidence contained in these two proceedings as part of the evidentiary record developed in the instant case.

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[74] *See* June 26 Order at 62,382 & 62,384.

74. Snohomish further challenges the Commission's decision not to consider evidence submitted in other California-related proceedings. As we explained in the June 26 Order on page 62,402, paragraphs 131-32:

> The Commission may reopen the record in its discretion where there is good cause. The Commission views good cause as consisting of extraordinary circumstances, that is, a change in circumstances that is more than just material, but goes to the very heart of the case. In deciding whether to exercise its discretion, 'the Commission looks to whether or not the movant has demonstrated the existence of extraordinary circumstances that outweigh the need for finality in the administrative process.' As the Commission explained in Opinion No. 238, 'we recognize of course that changes have occurred since the close of the record. But such changes always occur. Yet litigation must come to an end at some point. Hence the general rule is that the record once closed will not be reopened.'
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> The information now in the record provides a sufficient basis for our conclusions here. The evidence that Complainants seek to introduce into the record will not change the outcome of this proceeding... (*Footnotes omitted*).

Collateral Annex

75. Snohomish argues that the Commission should reconsider its decision upholding the Collateral Annex.

76. In the June 26 Order, we found that:

> the WSPP Agreement, Collateral Annex, Confirmation Agreement and Attachment A form a single, integrated agreement, which, as we held above, is to be reviewed under the "public interest" standard. Consistent with our conclusions above, Snohomish has failed to justify modification of the Collateral Annex.[75]

77. On rehearing, we reiterate that the WSPP Agreement, Collateral Annex, Confirmation Agreement and Attachment A form a single, integrated agreement, and that the Collateral Annex should be reviewed under the public interest standard. Even if Snohomish's contention that Section 39B does not apply to the Collateral Annex were correct, the Collateral Annex would still be subject to the public interest standard of review in light of our finding that, in accordance with Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement, the parties intended the application of the public interest standard of review. If Section 39B were not dispositive in regard to the Collateral Annex, then Section 6.1 of the WSPP Agreement would apply. Thus, any challenges to the Collateral Annex should be evaluated under the public interest standard of review. Furthermore, because the Collateral Annex is an integral part of the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract, the Collateral Annex cannot be examined separately from the rest of the contract. In the June 26 Order, we extensively analyzed all the evidence pertaining to the Snohomish-Morgan Stanley contract and concluded that Snohomish failed to present sufficient evidence showing that its contract with Morgan Stanley is contrary to the public interest.

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[75] *See* June 26 Order at 62,400.

Mirant Bankruptcy

78. On September 12, 2003, the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas issued a "Temporary Restraining Order Against the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission" ("TRO") in *In re Mirant Corp.* (*Mirant Corp. v. FERC*), Adversary Proceeding No. 03-4355, which enjoins the Commission "from taking any action, directly or indirectly, to require or coerce the [Mirant] Debtors to abide by the terms of any Wholesale Contract [to which a Mirant Debtor is a party] which Debtors are substantially performing or which Debtors are not performing pursuant to an order of the Court unless FERC shall have provided the Debtors with ten (10) days' written notice setting forth in detail the action which FERC seeks to take with respect to any Wholesale Contract which is the subject of this paragraph."

79. Should the TRO be converted into a preliminary injunction, an action that the Commission opposes, the Commission will appeal that order. Despite the Commission's disagreement with the validity of the TRO and its expectation that the TRO (or a preliminary injunction) will be vacated on appeal, the Commission must comply with it until vacated. The TRO requires ten days' written notice before the Commission takes a proscribed action with respect to a covered Mirant Wholesale Contract. Accordingly, to the extent that this Order requires Mirant to act in a manner proscribed by the TRO, the Order will provide written notice to Mirant of the action that FERC will take with respect to a covered Mirant Wholesale Contract, which action will not become effective until ten (10) days after issuance of this Order. In all other respects, this Order is effective immediately.

Requests for Rehearing of the April 23 Order

80. The April 23, 2003 was issued in response to a motion filed by SCWC and Snohomish in which they requested that the Commission disclose alleged prohibited off-the-record communications during a March 26, 2003 press conference attended by three commissioners and a conference call the same day between two commissioners and a group of Wall Street analysts. The Commission disagreed with movants' characterization of the briefings as prohibited off-the-record communications; nevertheless, to allay any concerns, the Commission granted movants(request for disclosure and directed its staff to place a transcript of the press conference and a summary of the telephone conference in the decisional record in this proceeding. The Commission stated that the transcript and summary would apprise the parties of any non-public communication, thereby maintaining the integrity of the process and curing any possible prejudice that the contacts may have caused in this proceeding. Accordingly, the Commission also denied Snohomish's additional request that Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell recuse themselves from the oral argument scheduled for that day and from any further decision making in this proceeding.

81. On May 23, 2003, SCWC and Snohomish filed a timely request for rehearing of the April 23 Order.

Ex Parte Allegations

82. SCWC and Snohomish first contend that the Commission erred in finding that the conference call did not violate Rule 2201 of the Commission's regulations, 18 C.F.R. § 385.2201, and that Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell were not required to recuse themselves from further participation in this proceeding. They claim specifically that the Commission's Revised

Summary of Events and Invitation List show that Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell violated Rule 2201 in the conference call by offering opinions about the merits and their likely votes in this and other contract proceedings. They also point to portions of an April 8, 2003 news article by Jason Leopold, which claimed that analysts from Schwab Capital Markets, Lehman Bros., Prudential, and Morgan Stanley stated that Commissioner Brownell said she and Chairman Wood would vote to uphold the contracts. They argue that even if the Commissioners only repeated what they said at the open meeting, the conversation still violated Rule 2201.

83. SCWC and Snohomish's arguments are without merit. The summary of the call demonstrates what it was -- an effort to brief the financial community on action taken by the Commission that same day at its public meeting with respect to important and controversial cases involving the California and Western energy markets. Understandably, the major impact those actions could have on the market would interest the financial community. Likewise of interest were the actions scheduled to be taken and postponed, but nevertheless discussed at the public meeting, in particular as relevant here Nevada Power's long-term contracts. Naturally, the analysts also inquired about these cases. Such inquiries in the context of a briefing, however, do not constitute a communication on the merits capable of influencing a decision, the prerequisite for an *ex parte* violation.[76] If that were the case, the Commission's *ex parte* rule could impede the Commissioners from expressing themselves or offering their opinions to the public, a common and necessary part of their jobs as public servants.

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[76] *See* 18 C.F.R. § 2201(c)(5) (2003).

84. To be sure, there is a fine line between a briefing or a speech and a discussion on the merits capable of influencing a decision. But clearly that line was not crossed here. First, contrary to what SCWC and Snohomish gleaned from Mr. Leopold's news article, nothing particularly new was discussed in the relatively brief (approximately 45 minutes) conference call. Also, there is no indication even from that article or from the Summary that anyone tried to influence the decision in this proceeding. In fact, the Inspector General of the Department of Energy, who was asked by two U.S. Senators to investigate the matter, "did not identify evidence, based on that available record, substantiating the allegation that the conduct of the call violated any Commission procedural rule."[77] For this purpose, the Inspector General interviewed 17 Wall Street representatives from 12 companies, nine of whom acknowledged participating in some or all of the conference call. [78] As the Inspector General found, "[n]one of [them] stated that Chairman Wood or Commissioner Brownell explicitly indicated, during the conference call, how they would vote on the contract cases."[79]

85. SCWC and Snohomish's concern that the Commissioners' statements might bind them to a particular vote is likewise unfounded. The cases they cite are inapposite, because those cases involved public statements

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[77] U.S. Department of Energy Office of Inspector General Special Inquiry, DOE/IG - 0610 June 2003.

[78] Wall Street representatives identified as participants and interviewed by the Inspector General were from Fitch Ratings, Lehman Brothers, Duquesne Capital Management, Merrill Lynch, Howard Weil (Legg Mason), Morgan Stanley, Moodys, Credit Lynonnais, S.A., Prudential Securities, Inc., Standard and Poor, Goldman Sachs, and Schwab Capital Markets.

[79] DOE/IG - 0610 June 2003, Results of the Inquiry p. 3.

made by decision makers that they would vote a certain way *prior* to examining the evidence.[80] Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell stated repeatedly in public, however, they were still examining the evidence and had not made a final decision. Moreover, at the time of the conference call, a massive record had already been compiled *and* reviewed by the Commission. The record, which started to be compiled as early as December 2001, included by the time of the conference call numerous pleadings, trial testimony, exhibits, initial and reply briefs, an ALJ initial decision, and briefs on and opposing exceptions. Indeed, the filing of briefs opposing exceptions normally closes the record in an adjudication. While the Commission took the extraordinary step here of holding an oral argument (subsequent to the time of the conference call), that does not change the fact that the record was complete and reviewed, and the Commission was poised to act that day on the issues in the cases. To think that the Commissioners had not formed some preliminary opinions in these circumstances is simply unrealistic. Accordingly, the conference call at issue here reflected no prejudgment on the part of Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell.

86. Even assuming the conference call was a prohibited off-the-record communication, the violation has already been remedied. Recusal is not the remedy, disclosure is. Administrative proceedings blemished by *ex parte* communications may be remedied administratively by

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[80] SCWC and Snohomish cite *Antoniu v. SEC*, 877 F.2d 721, 724 (8th Cir. 1989); *McClure v. Independent School District No. 16*, 228 F.3d 1205 (10th Cir. 2000); *Staton v. Mayes*, 552 F.2d 908 (10th Cir. 1977); and *Cinderella Career & Finishing Schools, Inc. v. FTC*, 425 F.2d 583 (D.C. Cir. 1970).

disclosing the communication and its contents.[81] In this regard, in the context of a Commission case, the court found that by placing summaries of meetings Commission officials held with industry officials, other parties were apprised "of any argument that may have been presented privately, thereby maintaining the integrity of the process and curing any possible prejudice that the contacts may have caused.[82]

87. In addition, in *Louisiana*, the court made clear that recusal was not necessary or desirable even though there may have been *ex parte* communications.[83] Recusal here, therefore, would be an extraordinary and unwarranted remedy.[84] The court further explained,

> recusal would be required only if the communications posed a serious likelihood of affecting the agency's ability to act fairly and impartially in the matter before it. In resolving that issue, one must look to the nature of the communications and particularly to whether they contain factual matter or other information outside of the record, which the parties did not have an opportunity to rebut.[85]

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[81] *See* 5 U.S.C. § 557(d)(1)(C)&(D); *Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization v. Federal Labor Relations Authority*, 685 F.2d 547, 565 n.36 (1982).

[82] *See Louisiana Ass'n of Indep. Producers v. FERC*, 958 F.2d 1101, 1112 (D.C. Cir. 1992)(Louisiana).

[83] *Id.* at 1112 (citing *FTC v. Cement Inst.*, 333 U.S. 683, 702 (1948)("It is expected that administrative official will build up expertise through experience with recurring issues.") and *Laird v. Tatum*, 409 U.S. 824, 837 (1972)("Such expertise should not lightly be tossed aside.")).

[84] *See Power Authority of the State of New York v. FERC*, 743 F.2d 93, 110 (2d Cir. 1984) ("The mere existence of such communications hardly requires a court or administrative body to disqualify itself.").

[85] *Id.* at 110.

88. As described above, the conference call contained no factual matter or other information outside the record, and even assuming it did, SCWC and Snohomish had ample chance to rebut it at the oral argument or by filing a response.

89. SCWC and Snohomish also argue on rehearing that the Commission's disclosure of the conference call was not adequate for a prohibited off-the-record communication in that (1) it was not recorded, (2) roll call was not taken and the identity of the participants is not known with certainty, (3) separate summaries of the communication were not prepared by Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell, and Kevin Cadden is not eligible under the rules to write the summary, (4) the summary was not available within 14 days of the communication, and (5) the investigation of the call for this and other possible off-the-record communications was not sufficient. SCWC and Snohomish are wrong on all counts.

90. Even assuming the APA and Rule 2201 required disclosure of the conference call, the Commission plainly met the disclosure requirements. For this purpose, Rule 2201 mirrors the APA disclosure requirements at 5 U.S.C. § 557(d)(1)(C). It requires that any decisional employee who makes or receives a prohibited off-the-record communication will promptly submit to the Commission's Secretary that communication, if written, or a summary of the substance of that communication, if oral. *See* 18 C.F.R. § 385.2201(f)(2). Any party may file a response to the communication. *See* 18 C.F.R. § 385.2201(f)(3). The Secretary will then, not less than every 14 days, issue a public notice listing any prohibited off-the-record communications or summaries of the communication received by her office. *See* 18 C.F.R. § 385.2201(h)(1). That is exactly what happened here, albeit in

response to SCWC and Snohomish's motion: a summary of the communication, to which these parties could have responded, was publicly noticed by the Secretary within moments of the Commission's treatment of the conference call as if it were an off-the-record communication.

91. SCWC and Snohomish's attempt in effect to impose their own additional requirements on the Commission must be rebuffed. There is no requirement that the conference call had to be recorded or all of the participants identified. Nevertheless, Mr. Cadden contacted numerous invitees asking if they had recorded the conference call; no one had. The Commission also disclosed a list of invitees since the participants did not take roll call. More the point, SCWC and Snohomish(s concerns about the identity of the outside participants are irrelevant. The communication is the target of the APA and Rule 2201, not the persons to whom the communication is made. Indeed, Rule 2201 prohibits certain off-the-record communications with *all* persons, not just parties or interested persons, outside the Commission. *See* 18 C.F.R. § 385.2201(b).

92. There is also no requirement that every Commission participant involved in an off-the-record communication file a separate summary. Mr. Cadden, who was present during the call, drafted the summary, and Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell reviewed and edited it. Contrary to SCWC and Snohomish's assertion, Mr. Cadden, Director of the Office of External Affairs, is a decisional employee and eligible under Rule 2201 to write the summary.[86] Along the same lines, Rule 2201 does not require multiple summaries, nor should it. Such duplicative effort would be administratively inefficient and burdensome.

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[86] *See* Policy Statement on *Separation of Functions*, 101 FERC ¶ 61,340, at 47 and 48.

93. There is likewise no requirement that a summary must be available within 14 days of the communication. Rule 2201 requires a Commission participant in a prohibited off-the-record communication to submit to the Secretary promptly that communication, if written, or a summary of the substance of that communication, if oral. *See* 18 C.F.R. § 385.2201(f)(2). Only then must she publish a notice. SCWC and Snohomish thus confuse the requirement of Rule 2201 that the Secretary release within 14 days of her receipt any such communications or summaries and the requirement that Commission participants in the communication promptly submit these items to the Secretary. Here, as noted, Mr. Cadden promptly submitted a summary of the substance of the communication in the conference call to the Secretary after the Commission chose to treat the call as if it involved an off-the-record communication. Within 14 days, in fact within hours, the Secretary released the summary received by her office.

94. As a final matter, neither the APA nor Rule 2201 requires an investigation.[87] As noted, however, the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Energy conducted a thorough investigation of the matter at the request of Senators Joseph Lieberman and Maria Cantwell. The Inspector General's report, which was issued on June 27, 2003, found that the Commission had not violated any procedural rules. Any further investigation would place a tremendous and unnecessary burden on the Commission, and effectively require the Commission to poll all of its

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[87] SCWC and Snohomish's reliance on *Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization v. FLRA*, 672 F.2d 109 (D.C. Cir. 1982) (PATCO), is without merit. In PATCO, the court ordered an investigation because of an allegation that a well-known organized labor figure had attempted to influence the vote of one of the FLRA members. There is no allegation of such an attempt to influence here.

employees.[88] Commission employees already have an affirmative obligation under Rule 2201 to report off-the-record communications should they occur. Similarly untenable is SCWC and Snohomish's request that invitees to the March 26 conference call be subpoenaed, required to state under oath whether they participated in the meeting or recorded the call, and required to provide their notes.[89]

Alleged Sunshine Act Violations

95. On July 28, 2003, Snohomish filed a supplemental request for rehearing alleging that the March 26 conference call violated the Sunshine Act, because no public notice was published and the meeting was not recorded.[90] Snohomish is wrong. The Sunshine Act applies only to a "meeting of an agency."[91] Section 552b(a)(2) defines a Sunshine Act "meeting" as "the deliberations of at least the number of individualized agency members required to take action on behalf of the agency where such deliberations determine or result in the joint conduct or disposition of official agency

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[88] For like reasons, the Commission will not address or pursue further the allegations made by Morgan Stanley in its April 22, 2003 motion against Commissioner Massey who supposedly received *ex parte* communications about these contract cases from Senator Cantwell.

[89] In addition to the summary disclosed by the Commission, on June 3, 2003, in response to separate FOIA requests, the Commission released to the SCWC and Snohomish more than 70 documents related to the call.

[90] This request is untimely as a request for rehearing of the April 23 Order, and the movants have failed to preserve the issue for judicial review. *See* 16 U.S.C. § 8251 (a) and (b). Nevertheless, the Commission will address the allegations.

[91] *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(b); 5 U.S.C. § 552 b(a)(2), *FCC v. ITT Word Communications, Inc.*, 466 U.S. 463, 469 (1984) ("None of the Sunshine Act's requirements is triggered, however, "unless the gathering in question is a 'meeting' of that agency.").

business." [92] Consistent with this, the Commission's Sunshine Act regulations specify that "the deliberations of at least a quorum of the Commission" are required in order for the Sunshine Act to apply. *See* 18 C.F.R. § 375.202(a)(1). Under the governing statute and regulations, at least three members of the Commission are required to be present for a quorum to exist. Specifically, the Department of Energy Organization Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7101-7352, which established the Commission provides that for the Commission "a quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of at least three members present."[93] Because only two Commissioners (Chairman Wood and Commissioner Brownell) participated in the call, there was no quorum to constitute a Commission "meeting" subject to the Sunshine Act.

96. Moreover, as discussed above, the conference call did not involve any "deliberations" that "determine or result in the joint conduct or disposition of official agency business." *See* 5 U.S.C. 552b(a)(2). The summary of the March 26 conference call confirms that the two commissioners merely expressed viewpoints that had already been discussed at the March 26 open meeting. Even if the Commissioners did express their views regarding this proceeding, no "official agency business" was disposed of or conducted during the conference call. Therefore, the Commission rejects Snohomish's allegation that the conference call violated the Sunshine Act.

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[92] *Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. v. NRC*, 216 F.3d 1180, 1182 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

[93] 42 U.S.C. § 7171(e); *see also* 18 C.F.R. § 375.101(e)(defining a quorum of the Commission as consisting of "at least three members present").

The Commission orders:

(A) The Complainants' requests for rehearing of the June 26 Order are hereby denied for the reasons stated in the body of this order.

(B) The Respondents' request for clarification of the June 26 Order is hereby granted in part and denied in part for the reasons stated in the body of this order.

(C) SCWC and Snohomish's rehearing request of the April 23, 2003 Order is hereby denied for the reasons stated in the body of this order.

By the Commission. Commissioner Massey dissenting with a separate statement attached.

Commissioner Brownell concurring with separate statement attached.

Linda Mitry
Acting Secretary

MASSEY, Commissioner, *dissenting*:

I dissented from the underlying order and nothing in today's order persuades me to change my mind. The public interest requires that the contracts at issue be reformed.

For the reasons stated in my dissent in the underlying order, I dissent from today's order.

William L. Massey
Commissioner

Nora Mead BROWNELL, Commissioner *concurring*:

1. I am writing separately to reiterate a concern I raised about the June 26 Order: the rationale for concluding that modification of the contracts is subject to the public interest standard of review. When these cases were set for hearing, I noted that existing judicial case law seemed to indicate that the public interest standard applied to all of these contracts based solely on the contracts' failure to explicitly reserve the buyers' right to seek unilateral changes under Section 206.[94] Nevertheless, I was willing to set the issue for hearing so that the parties and the ALJ could have an opportunity to further explore whether my understanding of the case law was accurate. Three ALJs have now independently come to the same conclusion: judicial case law establishes that in the absence of clear contractual language allowing unilateral contract modification, the party seeking the change must meet the public interest standard.[95]

2. This order could have simply affirmed the ALJ's conclusion on this point and ended there the analysis of which standard to apply. That is what I am voting to do. Unfortunately, today's order fails to do so and instead bases the finding of the applicable standard on an analysis of the extrinsic evidence that parties did or did not present at hearing. By doing so, the order ignores the law. The *Mobile-*

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[94] *Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company v. Duke Energy Trading and Marketing, L.L.C., et al.*, 99 FERC ¶ 61,047 (2002) (citing *Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F.3d 1091, 1096 (D.C. Cir. 1998) and *Boston Edison Co. v. FERC*, 233 F.3d 60, 67 (1st Cir. 2000)).

[95] *Public Utilities Commission of the State of California v. Sellers of Long-Term Contracts to the California Department of Water Resources*, et al., 102 FERC ¶ 63,013 at P 28 (2003); *Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company v. Duke Energy Trading and Marketing, L.L.C., et al.*, 101 FERC ¶ 63,031 at P 27 (2002); and *PacifiCorp v. Reliant Energy Services, Inc., et al.*, 102 FERC ¶ 63,030 at P 18 (2003).

Sierra doctrine is not an invention of the FERC that we are free to mold as we wish; it is a directive from theSupreme Court. Moreover, the order misses an opportunity to provide clarity and certainty to all market participants and leaves open the possibility that the Commission may order unnecessary fact-finding on the parties' intent in future contract abrogation cases.

APPENDIX E

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS,
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA;
California Electric Oversight Board,
Petitioners,

Pacific Gas and Electric Company;
Nevada Power Company;
Southern California Edison Co. ("Edison");
Department of Water and Power
of the City of Los Angeles,
Public Service Department of the City of Burbank,
Public Service Department of the City of Glendale,
and
Water and Power Department of the City
of Pasadena (Collectively "LADWP, et al.");
Sempra Energy;
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.;
Coral Power;
PPM Energy;
Public Utility District No.1
of Snohomish County, Washington;
Dynegy Power Marketing Inc.,
Intervenors,

v.

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION,
Respondent.

California Electric Oversight Board;
California Public Utilities Commission,
Petitioners,

Nevada Power Company;
Southern California Edison Co. ("Edison");
Department of Water and Power of the City of Los Angeles,
Public Service Department of the City of Burbank,
Public Service Department of the City of Glendale,
and Water and Power Department of the City of Pasadena
(Collectively "LADWP, et al.");
Sempra Energy;
Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, L.P.;
PPM Energy;
Public Utility District No. 1
of Snohomish County, Washington;
Dynegy Power Marketing Inc.,
Intervenors,

v.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission,
Respondent.

Nos. 03-74207, 03-74246.

Argued and Submitted Dec. 8, 2004.
Filed Dec. 19, 2006.

On Petition for Review of an Order
of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

FERC Nos. EL02-60, EL02-62, EL 02-60-000.

Before BROWNING, PREGERSON, and BERZON, Circuit Judges.

BERZON, Circuit Judge.

As in *Public Utility District No. 1 v. FERC* (*"PUD "*), Nos. 03-72511, et al. (9th Cir. Dec. __, 2006), a related case

also decided today, the petitioners--here, the California Public Utilities Commission ("PUC") and the California Electric Oversight Board ("CEOB") (collectively, "Public Utilities Commission")--challenge the statutory validity of electric power rates in certain wholesale power contracts. Again as in *PUD*, that challenge hinges on whether the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") was correct to apply the *Mobile-Sierra*[1] "public interest" doctrine or whether in doing so it failed to meet its statutory obligation to provide "just and reasonable" review. *See* 16 U.S.C. § 824e(a).

In *PUD*, we explained that *Mobile-Sierra* represents a presumption "that private parties to a wholesale electric power contract have negotiated a 'just and reasonable' contract over a designated period of time, lawful under the FPA throughout that period." *PUD*, Slip Op. at 19554. That presumption, however, "can be rebutted by establishing that the contract adversely affects the public interest." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19554. We concluded that, to establish the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption, "three prerequisites are necessary: (1) the contract by its own terms must not preclude the limited *Mobile-Sierra* review; (2) the regulatory scheme in which the contracts are formed must provide FERC with an opportunity for effective, timely review of the contracted rates; and (3) where, as here, FERC is relying on a market-based rate-setting system to produce just and reasonable rates, this review must permit consideration of all factors relevant to the propriety of the contract's formation." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19555-56. In *PUD* we found two of these prerequisites lacking and remanded to FERC for it to

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[1] This shorthand takes its name from two Supreme Court cases decided on the same day: *United Gas Pipe Line Co. v. Mobile Gas Service Corp.* (Mobile), 350 U.S. 332, 76 S.Ct. 373, 100 L.Ed. 373 (1956), and *Federal Power Commission v. Sierra Pacific Power Co.* (Sierra), 350 U.S. 348, 76 S.Ct. 368, 100 L.Ed. 388 (1956).

consider the propriety of applying the *Mobile-Sierra* mode of review to the contracts at issue. We held, in the alternative, that even if *Mobile-Sierra* properly applied, FERC's "finding that the challenged contracts do not affect the public interest was based on a substantively erroneous mode of analysis." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19549.

Applying *PUD* to the challenged contracts in this case, we grant the petition to review and remand to the agency to apply the modes of review outlined in *PUD*.

I.

Much of the relevant background to this case is described in *PUD*. *See id.*, Slip Op. at 19567-83. We therefore will summarize only those facts relevant to the present case.

A. California Energy Crisis

California responded to the energy crisis outlined in *PUD* in several ways, although not until after "rolling blackout" became a household phrase and several of California's largest utilities bordered on insolvency. Governor Gray Davis declared a state of emergency on January 17, 2001, and ordered the California Department of Water Resources ("CDWR") to purchase forward power "as expeditiously as possible." On February 1, 2001, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1 of the 2001-2002 First Extraordinary Session ("AB1X"), which authorized CDWR to purchase power through the end of December 31, 2002.

Between February 6 and August 23, 2001, CDWR executed 57 forward contracts with 28 suppliers. Some of these contracts explicitly called for applying the relatively

stringent *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest" test, rather than the relatively relaxed "just and reasonable" test to judge the rates included in the contracts. Other contracts were silent regarding the test to apply. The 57 contracts include 32 agreements with the intervenor-respondents in this case:[2]

- Coral Power, for prices from $169 to $249/MWh, for delivery in 2001 and 2002;
- Dynegy Power Marketing, Inc., for $119.50/MWh, for delivery from January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2004;
- Mirant Americas Energy Marketing, for $148.65/MWh, for delivery between June 1, 2001 and December 31, 2002;
- PacifiCorp ("PPM"), for $70/MWh, for delivery between July 29, 2001 and June 30, 2002; and
- Sempra Energy Resources, for $189/MWh, for delivery between June 1, 2001 and September 30, 2001.

Under AB1X, the people of California must pay the cost of these contracts through their electricity rates. *See* Cal. Water Code § 80104 (West) ("Upon the delivery of power to them, the retail end use customers shall be deemed to have purchased that power from the department. Payment for any sale shall be a direct obligation of the retail end use customer to the department."). Raymond Hart, who testified for the Public Utilities Commission, described this statutory provision as ensuring that costs of CDWR contracts would "be passed on to the retail end-users of the IOUs [investor-owned utilities] through their retail electricity rates." In other words, CDWR passed the costs of the power it

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[2] These energy companies are all intervenors on behalf of FERC in this case.

purchased to local utilities--such as Pacific Gas and Electric--which, in turn, passed it on to California consumers. FERC questions whether the challenged contracts call for rates above long-run competitive prices, *Pub. Utils. Comm'n v. Sellers of Long Term Contracts,* 103 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,354, at ¶ 62,415 (2003), but does not contest that the cost of those contracts is passed on to California consumers.

On June 19, 2001, FERC issued a price mitigation order for spot markets regarding several western states, which went into effect the following day. Subsequently, prices generally returned to pre-crisis levels in both spot and forward markets, completing a downward cycle that had begun about a month prior to the June 19 Order.

B. Procedural Background

On February 25, 2002, PUC filed complaints under section 206(a) of the Federal Power Act,[3] 16 U.S.C. § 824e(a), seeking modification of all power contracts signed by CDWR in 2001.[4] The only contracts at issue on this

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[3] Whenever the Commission, after a hearing had upon its own motion or upon complaint, shall find that any rate, charge, or classification, demanded observed, charged, or collected by any public utility for any transmission or sale subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, or that any rule, regulation, practice, or contract affect such rate, charge, or classification is *unjust, unreasonable,* unduly discriminatory or preferential, the Commission shall determine the *just and reasonable* rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract to be thereafter observed and in force, and shall fix the same by order. 16 U.S.C. § 824e(a) (emphases added).

[4] Much of the parties' disagreement hinges on whether the identity of the parties--state agencies other than those that entered into the challenged agreements--affects the application of *Mobile-Sierra* to those agreements. As we decide, applying *PUD,* that FERC erred for other reasons by applying *Mobile-Sierra,* we need not reach the question of the impact of

appeal are those listed above, which PUC alleges overcharge CDWR and California consumers by a total of $1.4 billion. In the process of adjudicating and ultimately denying these complaints, FERC issued a series of orders:

On April 25, 2002, FERC ordered a hearing to determine "whether the dysfunctional California spot markets adversely affected the long-term bilateral markets, and, if so, whether modification of any individual contract at issue [was] warranted." *Pub. Utils. Comm'n v. Sellers of Long Term Contracts,* 99 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,087, at ¶ 61,384 (2002) (footnote omitted). FERC announced that it would review all contracts explicitly calling for "public interest" review under *Mobile-Sierra,*[5] while setting for hearing the question of whether it would also apply that standard to contracts that were silent on the issue.[6] *Id.* ¶ 61,383. FERC dismissed the complaints with regard to all contracts executed on or after June 20, 2001, the date its final price mitigation order went into effect, including the CDWR contract with PPM, which had been negotiated before but signed after that date. Finally, the April 25 order held that 19625 both the PUC and CEOB " 'stepped into the shoes' of CDWR," which is not a party in this case, because they are all state agencies. *Id.* ¶ 61,382. Accordingly, the petitioners would both be treated as if they were the same entity as CDWR. *Id.*

Before the Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), PUC sought discovery regarding the sellers' ability to exercise market power in the spot markets. The ALJ denied this request, reasoning that "the hearing order in this case takes as a given the proposition that the California spot markets were

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the parties' identity.

[5]These included the Coral and Mirant contracts.

[6] These included the Dynegy, Sempra, and PPM contracts.

dysfunctional." Additionally, the ALJ excluded some evidence, in the form of testimony by PUC's expert witnesses, that related to the sellers' market power in the forward markets.

At the conclusion of the ALJ's hearing, FERC created a two-track process. For contracts that had explicit provisions calling for the "public interest" test, FERC instructed the ALJ not to rule on those cases and instead to certify the record directly to the Commission. For the other contracts, the ALJ was directed to decide only whether the parties intended the public interest test to apply. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n v. Sellers of Long Term Contracts,* 101 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,293, at ¶ 62,173 (2002).

On February 10, 2003, FERC, on remand from this court, *Pub. Utils. Comm'n of Cal. v. FERC,* Order of August 21, 2002, (9th Cir. Docket Nos. 01-71051, et al.), issued an order in a separate case relating to spot market manipulation, permitting discovery for over 100 days regarding such manipulation and requiring parties in that case to provide an index of discovered material "for each other pending or proposed proceeding" where the parties so request. *San Diego Gas & Elec. Co. v. Sellers of Energy & Ancillary Servs.,* 102 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,164, at ¶ 61,446 (2003). Through this "100 Days Proceeding," PUC discovered additional evidence regarding sellers' spot market manipulation.

On March 26, 2003, FERC staff issued its "Final Report on Price Manipulation in Western Markets." Staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Final Report on Price Manipulation in Western Markets: Fact-Finding Investigation of Potential Manipulation of Electric and Natural Gas Prices* ["Staff Report"] (2003), *available at* http://www.ferc.gov/legal/maj-ord-reg/land-docs/PART-I-3-26-03.pdf [Staff Report]. The Staff Report concluded that

the spot market dysfunction had "significant" adverse effects on the forward markets. *Id.* at V-12.

FERC issued an initial decision on June 26, 2003, rejecting all of PUC's claims. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n,* 103 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,354 (2003). Most importantly, FERC concluded that the "public interest" test would apply to all contracts at issue, upholding the ALJ's opinion that parties to all contracts intended to trigger that test. *Id.* ¶ 62,409. Accordingly, evidence regarding the spot markets' adverse effect on forward markets--the very issue FERC initially deemed to be the purpose of the hearings--was deemed not "relevant," as the "just and reasonable" test did not apply. *Id.* ¶ 62,415. "Under the 'public interest' standard, to justify contract modification it is not enough to show that forward prices became unjust and unreasonable due to the impact of spot market dysfunctions; it must be shown that the rates, terms and conditions are contrary to the public interest."[7] *Id.* Further, FERC concluded that PUC failed to satisfy any of the three prongs of the public interest test established by Supreme Court precedent (described below) or "any other factor" that might go to public interest. *Id.* FERC found "no credible record evidence that the contracts at issue are placing Complainants in financial distress." *Id.* FERC based this conclusion on a comparison of CDWR's goal of "a portfolio that yielded a weighted average price no higher than $70/MWh" with its actual portfolio, 19627 which averaged a price of $84/MWh for 2001-2005. *Id.* Commissioner Massey dissented, calling application of the "public interest" test inappropriate. Commissioner Massey also concluded that PUC proved a strong "nexus between the

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[7] This language appears verbatim in FERC's *PUD* orders. *See Nev. Power Co. v. Enron Power Mktg., Inc.,* 103 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,353, at ¶ 61,397 (2003).

California spot market and the forward contract market," and that PUC met both the just and reasonable and public interest standards for contract reformation. *Id.* ¶¶ 62,448-49 (Massey, Comm'r, dissenting).

FERC denied rehearing on November 10, 2003. *Pub. Utils.Comm'n v. Sellers of Long Term Contracts,* 105 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,182 (2003). One week later, PUC and CEOB filed petitions for review with this court.

C. Standard of Review

We review FERC's legal decisions de novo. *Am. Rivers v. FERC,* 201 F.3d 1186, 1194 (9th Cir. 1999). "Our review of a FERC decision is limited to whether the decision was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, unsupported by substantial evidence, or not in accordance with the law." *Cal. Dep't of Water Res. v. FERC,* 341 F.3d 906, 910 (9th Cir. 2003); *see also* 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A). The court reviews factual findings for substantial evidence, 16 U.S.C. § 8251 (b), and will uphold them so long as the agency considered all relevant factors and did not make a clear error of judgment, *Cal. Dep't of Water Res.,* 341 F.3d at 906. When an agency makes an informed choice to rely on one expert opinion among competing expert opinions, the agency is entitled to deference. *Bear Lake Watch, Inc. v. FERC,* 324 F.3d 1071, 1076-77 (9th Cir. 2003). FERC "is not obligated to justify deviations from an approach suggested by its own staff" unless "the conceptual underpinnings of the staff's approach [are] critical to a reasoned resolution of the problem"; in such cases FERC must address staff recommendations. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n v. FERC,* 817 F.2d 858, 862 (D.C. Cir. 1987).

II. Application of Mobile-Sierra

We hold in *PUD*, decided today, that FERC may apply the *Mobile-Sierra* "public interest" mode of review only if three conditions are present: "(1) the contract by its own terms must not preclude the limited *Mobile-Sierra* review; (2) the regulatory scheme in which the contracts are formed must provide FERC with an opportunity for effective, timely review of the contracted rates; and (3) where, as here, FERC is relying on a market-based rate-setting system to produce just and reasonable rates, this review must permit consideration of all factors relevant to the propriety of the contract's formation." *PUD*, Slip Op. at 19555-56. Here, it is undisputed that the contracts at issue either explicitly call for *Mobile-Sierra* review or do not preclude it. *Cf. PUD*, Slip Op. at 19589-93. Thus, resolution of the present case turns on whether the second two *Mobile-Sierra* prerequisites were met, permitting FERC to rely on the doctrine's presumption of just and reasonable rates.

1. *Timely and Effective Review of Rates*

In *PUD*, we hold "that although market-based rate authority *can* qualify as sufficient prior review to justify limited *Mobile-Sierra* review, it can only do so when accompanied by effective oversight permitting timely reconsideration of market-based authorization if market conditions change." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19593. Here, as in *PUD*, "the fatal flaw in FERC's approach to 'oversight' is that it precludes timely consideration of sudden market changes and offers no protection to purchasers victimized by the abuses of sellers or dysfunctional market conditions that FERC itself only notices in hindsight." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19603.

Energy company intervenors and amici argue here, as FERC did in *PUD,* that petitioners or CDWR should have challenged the sellers' market-based rate authority before entering into the forward contracts, rather than agree to and subsequently challenge the contracts. This argument fails for the same reasons it failed in *PUD. See id.,* Slip Op. at 19601-02 ("Any such challenge, even if successful, could not have been a basis for reforming the challenged contracts....").

Dynegy raises an argument unique to its contract, which it did file with FERC, effective March 6, 2001, and which FERC opened to the public for comments.[8] *Dynegy Power Mktg., Inc.,* 95 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,371 (2001). Dynegy asserts that PUC had an opportunity, during the public comment period, to raise a substantive challenge to this contract but declined to do so.

Nothing about this circumstance, however, justifies a contrary result from that reached with regard to all the other contracts. FERC explicitly noted that accepting the filing of the Dynegy contract did "not constitute approval of any ... rate ...; and such action is without prejudice to any findings or orders which ... may hereafter be made by the Commission in any proceeding now pending or hereafter instituted by or against Dynegy." *Id.* ¶ 62,401. FERC, therefore, did not give prior approval to the Dynegy contract any more than it did for any of the other contracts challenged here. Further, any challenge to the contract at the time FERC sought public comments would have been hampered by limited information: At the time Dynegy filed its contract, the full scale of spot market manipulation and

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[8] Dynegy's argument on this point refers only to the prior review prerequisite to application of *Mobile-Sierra.* Even if its argument succeeded on this point, it would not be sufficient to overcome the other portions of our opinion which provide independent reasons for granting PUC's petition for review.

forward market dysfunction was not nearly as fully known as it is today.

For these reasons, we hold here that FERC "cannot use [its] choice [of regulatory regime] to excuse its duty to maintain effective oversight [of rates] and then invoke *Mobile-Sierra* as a ground for precluding ordinary rate review, including review of the propriety of market-based rate authority at the time the contracts became effective." *PUD*, Slip Op. at 19603.

2. *Meaningful Review of Contract Formation*

Even if the agency had not committed "[t]his fundamental procedural error[,] ... FERC's substantive adherence to *Mobile-Sierra* without regard to the market conditions in which the contracts at issue were formed" was error. *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19604. In particular, FERC refused to consider evidence of forward market dysfunction caused by the spot market, asserting that such evidence was not "relevant" unless the "just and reasonable" test applied. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n*, 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,415. Because "*Mobile-Sierra* cannot apply without a determination that the challenged contract was initially formed free from the influence of improper factors, such as market manipulation, the leverage of market power, or an otherwise dysfunctional market," *PUD*, Slip Op. at 19604, FERC's reliance on the "public interest" mode of review here was improper.

As in *PUD*, FERC failed to respond to the Staff Report. *See PUD*, Slip Op. at 19604-06. Rather than consider its discussion of the dysfunction in the forward market, FERC treated the Staff Report's conclusions as only relevant if it was *first* determined that just and reasonable review is applicable, the same way it treated other evidence of market dysfunction. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n*, 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,415 & n.38. This was error. *See PUD*, Slip Op. at

19606 ("[T]he questions raised by the Staff Report--whether and how the manipulated spot market influenced the forward markets--*are* relevant to determining whether the *Mobile-Sierra* doctrine applies, because they raise questions about the market conditions at the time of contract formation and thus about the propriety of relying on a regime of market-based rate authority at that time to produce just and reasonable rates.").

FERC also affirmed the ALJ's exclusion of some of PUC's other evidence-- including testimony of expert witnesses--regarding the effect of spot market manipulation on forward prices. As *PUD* makes clear, such evidence is essential to the question of whether the forward energy market was sufficiently well-functioning to apply *Mobile-Sierra*. *See id.*, Slip Op. at 19605- 06.

On remand, FERC should consider the excluded evidence, as well as all other relevant evidence--whether part of the "100 Day Proceeding" or not--before determining whether the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption applies.

3. *Effect on the "Public Interest"*

Consistent with *PUD*, "FERC's error in its approach to deciding *whether* to apply the *Mobile-Sierra* presumption was compounded by it use of an erroneous standard for determining whether the challenged contracts affect the public interest." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19606-07. "In its efforts to determine the impact on the public interest under *Mobile-Sierra* ... FERC relied on the wrong legal standard, applying factors taken from the context of a *low-rate* challenge rather than those relevant to the *high-rate* challenge present in this case." *Id.*, Slip Op. at 19607.

FERC determined that the challenged contracts in this case did not affect the public interest because PUC:

> "presented very little evidence relevant to the *Mobile-Sierra* standard of review. Based on the record, we conclude that Complainants have failed to demonstrate that any of the three prongs announced in the *Sierra* case has been met or that any other factor introduced into evidence warrants a finding that any of the contracts is contrary to the public interest and should be modified.[9]"

Pub. Utils. Comm'n, 103 F.E.R.C. at ¶ 62,415. FERC determined that because consumers did not face an "excessive burden" whether consumers endured *any* burden was inapposite. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n*, 105 F.E.R.C. 61,182, at ¶¶ 66-67. As we explained in *PUD*, this determination fundamentally misunderstands the public interest inquiry in the context of a high-rate challenge. *See PUD*, Slip Op. at 19607-11.

Under California law, all costs of the challenged contracts were passed on to consumers. *See* Cal. Water Code § 80104. The parties debate whether retail power rates in fact increased after the parties signed these contracts, but this dispute is not determinative. Even if rates did not increase in the months after CDWR signed the contracts, the retail rates charged consumers because of these contracts might have been higher than they would have been had the wholesale contract rates been lower. *See PUD*, Slip Op. at

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[9] In such circumstances [when the public interest test satisfies the Commission's duty to ensure just and reasonable rates] the sole concern of the Commission would seem to be whether the rate is so low as to adversely affect the public interest--as where it might impair the financial ability of the public utility to continue its service, cast upon other consumers an excessive burden, or be unduly discriminatory. *Sierra*, 350 U.S. at 355, 76 S.Ct. 368.

19609 ("[I]f a challenged contract imposes any significant cost on ultimate customers because of a wholesale rate too high to be within a zone of reasonableness, that contract affects the public interest." (citations omitted)).

III.

Finally, we grant PUC's petition as it relates to FERC's dismissal of its complaint regarding CDWR's contract with PPM. FERC's decision to dismiss the case against the PPM contract without a hearing may be affirmed only if FERC addressed all "relevant factors in dispute and ... a formal hearing was unnecessary for the Commission to reach its conclusion." *Pac. Gas & Elec. Co. v. FERC*, 746 F.2d 1383, 1386 (9th Cir. 1984). We believe FERC failed to address all relevant factors here.

FERC dismissed the PPM challenge because the parties entered the contract after FERC's June 19 Order. *Pub. Utils. Comm'n*, 99 F.E.R.C. ¶ 61,087, at ¶¶ 61,383-84 (2002). FERC did not consider, however, whether some market dysfunction may have lingered after that order took effect. PPM, intervening in this case, argues that the chronology of its contract factually distinguishes it from the other challenged contracts. We disagree.

It is not at all clear that the forward markets had stabilized by the date when the parties entered the PPM contract. On the contrary, FERC's Staff Report concluded that contracts entered after June 19, 2001, "generally show a persistence of the effects found during the crisis, i.e., statistically significant positive elasticities of the forward price with respect to the spot price." Staff Report at V-14. While the Staff Report qualified its conclusion regarding post-June 19 effects of market power, noting that, "[o]n average," post-June 19 contracts demonstrated a lesser effect

from the spot markets than pre-June 19 contracts, FERC should have at least considered the possibility that ill effects remained. Therefore, the agency's dismissal of the challenge was inappropriate.

IV.

For the foregoing reasons, we determine that a remand is necessary so that FERC can apply the proper statutory standards to determine, first, whether *Mobile-Sierra* review of the challenged contracts is appropriate; second, if so, to apply the modified form of *Mobile-Sierra* review outlined in *PUD* and referenced in this opinion; and finally, if not, to apply full just and reasonable review to the challenged contracts.

Petition for Review GRANTED AND REMANDED.

APPENDIX F

STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

Pertinent provisions of the Federal Power Act are codified at 16 U.S.C. §§ 791 *et seq.* as follows:

§ 824. Declaration of policy; application of subchapter

(a) Federal regulation of transmission and sale of electric energy

It is declared that the business of transmitting and selling electric energy for ultimate distribution to the public is affected with a public interest, and that Federal regulation of matters relating to generation to the extent provided in this subchapter and subchapter III of this chapter and of that part of such business which consists of the transmission of electric energy in interstate commerce and the sale of such energy at wholesale in interstate commerce is necessary in the public interest, such Federal regulation, however, to extend only to those matters which are not subject to regulation by the States.

(b) Use or sale of electric energy in interstate commerce

(1) The provisions of this subchapter shall apply to the transmission of electric energy in interstate commerce and to the sale of electric energy at wholesale in interstate commerce, but except as provided in paragraph (2) shall not apply to any other sale of electric energy or deprive a State or State commission of its lawful authority now exercised over the exportation of hydroelectric energy which is transmitted across a State line. The Commission shall have jurisdiction over all facilities for such transmission or sale of electric energy, but shall not have jurisdiction, except as specifically provided in this subchapter and subchapter III of

this chapter, over facilities used for the generation of electric energy or over facilities used in local distribution or only for the transmission of electric energy in intrastate commerce, or over facilities for the transmission of electric energy consumed wholly by the transmitter.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (f) of this section, the provisions of sections 824b(a)(2), 824e(e), 824i, 824j, 824j-1, 824k, 824o, 824p, 824q, 824r, 824s, 824t, 824u, and 824v shall apply to the entities described in such provisions, and such entities shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission for purposes of carrying out such provisions and for purposes of applying the enforcement authorities of this chapter with respect to such provisions. Compliance with any order or rule of the Commission under the provisions of section 824b(a)(2), 824e(e), 824i, 824j, 824j-1, 824k, 824o, 824p, 824q, 824r, 824s, 824t, 824u, and 824v, shall not make an electric utility or other entity subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission for any purposes other than the purposes specified in the preceding sentence.

(c) Electric energy in interstate commerce

For the purpose of this subchapter, electric energy shall be held to be transmitted in interstate commerce if transmitted from a State and consumed at any point outside thereof; but only insofar as such transmission takes place within the United States.

(d) "Sale of electric energy at wholesale" defined

The term "sale of electric energy at wholesale" when used in this subchapter, means a sale of electric energy to any person for resale.

(e) "Public utility" defined

The term "public utility" when used in this subchapter and subchapter III of this chapter means any person who owns or operates facilities subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission under this subchapter (other than facilities subject to such jurisdiction solely by reason of section 824e(e), 824e(f), 824i, 824j, 824j-1, 824k, 824o, 824p, 824q, 824r, 824s, 824t, 824u, and 824v).

(f) United States, State, political subdivision of a State, or agency or instrumentality thereof exempt

No provision in this subchapter shall apply to, or be deemed to include, the United States, a State or any political subdivision of a State, an electric cooperative that receives financing under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 901 et seq.) or that sells less than 4,000,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year, or any agency, authority, or instrumentality of any one or more of the foregoing, or any corporation which is wholly owned, directly or indirectly, by any one or more of the foregoing, or any officer, agent, or employee of any of the foregoing acting as such in the course of his official duty, unless such provision makes specific reference thereto.

(g) Books and records

(1) Upon written order of a State commission, a State commission may examine the books, accounts, memoranda, contracts, and records of--

(A) an electric utility company subject to its regulatory au thority under State law,

(B) any exempt wholesale generator selling energy at wholesale to such electric utility, and

(C) any electric utility company, or holding company

thereof, which is an associate company or affiliate of an exempt wholesale generator which sells electric energy to an electric utility company referred to in subparagraph (A),

wherever located, if such examination is required for the effective discharge of the State commission's regulatory responsibilities affecting the provision of electric service.

(2) Where a State commission issues an order pursuant to paragraph (1), the State commission shall not publicly disclose trade secrets or sensitive commercial information.

(3) Any United States district court located in the State in which the State commission referred to in paragraph (1) is located shall have jurisdiction to enforce compliance with this subsection.

(4) Nothing in this section shall--

(A) preempt applicable State law concerning the provi sion of records and other information; or

(B) in any way limit rights to obtain records and other in formation under Federal law, contracts, or otherwise.

(5) As used in this subsection the terms "affiliate", "associate company", "electric utility company", "holding company", "subsidiary company", and "exempt wholesale generator" shall have the same meaning as when used in the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 2005 [42 U.S.C.A. § 16451 et seq.].

§ 824d. Rates and charges; schedules; suspension of new rates; automatic adjustment clauses

(a) Just and reasonable rates

All rates and charges made, demanded, or received by any public utility for or in connection with the transmission or sale of electric energy subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, and all rules and regulations affecting or pertaining to such rates or charges shall be just and reasonable, and any such rate or charge that is not just and reasonable is hereby declared to be unlawful.

(b) Preference or advantage unlawful

No public utility shall, with respect to any transmission or sale subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, (1) make or grant any undue preference or advantage to any person or subject any person to any undue prejudice or disadvantage, or (2) maintain any unreasonable difference in rates, charges, service, facilities, or in any other respect, either as between localities or as between classes of service.

(c) Schedules

Under such rules and regulations as the Commission may prescribe, every public utility shall file with the Commission, within such time and in such form as the Commission may designate, and shall keep open in convenient form and place for public inspection schedules showing all rates and charges for any transmission or sale subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, and the classifications, practices, and regulations affecting such rates and charges, together with all contracts which in any manner affect or relate to such rates, charges, classifications, and services.

(d) Notice required for rate changes

Unless the Commission otherwise orders, no change

shall be made by any public utility in any such rate, charge, classification, or service, or in any rule, regulation, or contract relating thereto, except after sixty days' notice to the Commission and to the public. Such notice shall be given by filing with the Commission and keeping open for public inspection new schedules stating plainly the change or changes to be made in the schedule or schedules then in force and the time when the change or changes will go into effect. The Commission, for good cause shown, may allow changes to take effect without requiring the sixty days' notice herein provided for by an order specifying the changes so to be made and the time when they shall take effect and the manner in which they shall be filed and published.

(e) Suspension of new rates; hearings; five-month period

Whenever any such new schedule is filed the Commission shall have authority, either upon complaint or upon its own initiative without complaint, at once, and, if it so orders, without answer or formal pleading by the public utility, but upon reasonable notice, to enter upon a hearing concerning the lawfulness of such rate, charge, classification, or service; and, pending such hearing and the decision thereon, the Commission, upon filing with such schedules and delivering to the public utility affected thereby a statement in writing of its reasons for such suspension, may suspend the operation of such schedule and defer the use of such rate, charge, classification, or service, but not for a longer period than five months beyond the time when it would otherwise go into effect; and after full hearings, either completed before or after the rate, charge, classification, or service goes into effect, the Commission may make such orders with reference thereto as would be proper in a proceeding initiated after it had become effective. If the proceeding has not been concluded and an order made at the expiration of such five months, the proposed change of rate, charge, classification, or service shall go into effect at the

end of such period, but in case of a proposed increased rate or charge, the Commission may by order require the interested public utility or public utilities to keep accurate account in detail of all amounts received by reason of such increase, specifying by whom and in whose behalf such amounts are paid, and upon completion of the hearing and decision may by further order require such public utility or public utilities to refund, with interest, to the persons in whose behalf such amounts were paid, such portion of such increased rates or charges as by its decision shall be found not justified. At any hearing involving a rate or charge sought to be increased, the burden of proof to show that the increased rate or charge is just and reasonable shall be upon the public utility, and the Commission shall give to the hearing and decision of such questions preference over other questions pending before it and decide the same as speedily as possible.

(f) Review of automatic adjustment clauses and public utility practices; action by Commission; "automatic adjustment clause" defined

(1) Not later than 2 years after November 9, 1978, and not less often than every 4 years thereafter, the Commission shall make a thorough review of automatic adjustment clauses in public utility rate schedules to examine--

(A) whether or not each such clause effectively provides incentives for efficient use of resources (including economical purchase and use of fuel and electric en ergy), and

(B) whether any such clause reflects any costs other than costs which are--

(i) subject to periodic fluctuations and

(ii) not susceptible to precise determinations in rate cases prior to the time such costs are incurred.

Such review may take place in individual rate proceedings or in generic or other separate proceedings applicable to one or more utilities.

(2) Not less frequently than every 2 years, in rate proceedings or in generic or other separate proceedings, the Commission shall review, with respect to each public utility, practices under any automatic adjustment clauses of such utility to insure efficient use of resources (including economical purchase and use of fuel and electric energy) under such clauses.

(3) The Commission may, on its own motion or upon complaint, after an opportunity for an evidentiary hearing, order a public utility to--

(A) modify the terms and provisions of any automatic ad justment clause, or

(B) cease any practice in connection with the clause,

if such clause or practice does not result in the economical purchase and use of fuel, electric energy, or other items, the cost of which is included in any rate schedule under an automatic adjustment clause.

(4) As used in this subsection, the term "automatic adjustment clause" means a provision of a rate schedule which provides for increases or decreases (or both), without prior hearing, in rates reflecting increases or decreases (or both) in costs incurred by an electric utility. Such term does not include any rate which takes effect subject to refund and subject to a later determination of the appropriate amount of such rate.

§ 824e. Power of Commission to fix rates and charges; determination of cost of production or transmission

(a) Unjust or preferential rates, etc.; statement of reasons for changes; hearing; specification of issues

Whenever the Commission, after a hearing held upon its own motion or upon complaint, shall find that any rate, charge, or classification, demanded, observed, charged, or collected by any public utility for any transmission or sale subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, or that any rule, regulation, practice, or contract affecting such rate, charge, or classification is unjust, unreasonable, unduly discriminatory or preferential, the Commission shall determine the just and reasonable rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract to be thereafter observed and in force, and shall fix the same by order. Any complaint or motion of the Commission to initiate a proceeding under this section shall state the change or changes to be made in the rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract then in force, and the reasons for any proposed change or changes therein. If, after review of any motion or complaint and answer, the Commission shall decide to hold a hearing, it shall fix by order the time and place of such hearing and shall specify the issues to be adjudicated.

(b) Refund effective date; preferential proceedings; statement of reasons for delay; burden of proof; scope of refund order; refund orders in cases of dilatory behavior; interest

Whenever the Commission institutes a proceeding under this section, the Commission shall establish a refund effective date. In the case of a proceeding instituted on complaint, the refund effective date shall not be earlier than the date of the filing of such complaint nor later than 5

months after the filing of such complaint. In the case of a proceeding instituted by the Commission on its own motion, the refund effective date shall not be earlier than the date of the publication by the Commission of notice of its intention to initiate such proceeding nor later than 5 months after the publication date. Upon institution of a proceeding under this section, the Commission shall give to the decision of such proceeding the same preference as provided under section 824d of this title and otherwise act as speedily as possible. If no final decision is rendered by the conclusion of the 180-day period commencing upon initiation of a proceeding pursuant to this section, the Commission shall state the reasons why it has failed to do so and shall state its best estimate as to when it reasonably expects to make such decision. In any proceeding under this section, the burden of proof to show that any rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract is unjust, unreasonable, unduly discriminatory, or preferential shall be upon the Commission or the complainant. At the conclusion of any proceeding under this section, the Commission may order refunds of any amounts paid, for the period subsequent to the refund effective date through a date fifteen months after such refund effective date, in excess of those which would have been paid under the just and reasonable rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract which the Commission orders to be thereafter observed and in force: *Provided,* That if the proceeding is not concluded within fifteen months after the refund effective date and if the Commission determines at the conclusion of the proceeding that the proceeding was not resolved within the fifteen-month period primarily because of dilatory behavior by the public utility, the Commission may order refunds of any or all amounts paid for the period subsequent to the refund effective date and prior to the conclusion of the proceeding. The refunds shall be made, with interest, to those persons who have paid those rates or charges which are the subject of the proceeding.

(c) Refund considerations; shifting costs; reduction in revenues; "electric utility companies" and "registered holding company" defined

Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, in a proceeding commenced under this section involving two or more electric utility companies of a registered holding company, refunds which might otherwise be payable under subsection (b) of this section shall not be ordered to the extent that such refunds would result from any portion of a Commission order that (1) requires a decrease in system production or transmission costs to be paid by one or more of such electric companies; and (2) is based upon a determination that the amount of such decrease should be paid through an increase in the costs to be paid by other electric utility companies of such registered holding company: *Provided,* That refunds, in whole or in part, may be ordered by the Commission if it determines that the registered holding company would not experience any reduction in revenues which results from an inability of an electric utility company of the holding company to recover such increase in costs for the period between the refund effective date and the effective date of the Commission's order. For purposes of this subsection, the terms "electric utility companies" and "registered holding company" shall have the same meanings as provided in the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935, as amended [15 U.S.C.A. § 79 et seq.].

(d) Investigation of costs

The Commission upon its own motion, or upon the request of any State commission whenever it can do so without prejudice to the efficient and proper conduct of its affairs, may investigate and determine the cost of the production or transmission of electric energy by means of

facilities under the jurisdiction of the Commission in cases where the Commission has no authority to establish a rate governing the sale of such energy.

(*e*)(1) In this subsection:

(A) The term "short-term sale" means an agreement for the sale of electric energy at wholesale in interstate commerce that is for a period of 31 days or less (ex cluding monthly contracts subject to automatic re newal).

(B) The term "applicable Commission rule" means a Commission rule applicable to sales at wholesale by public utilities that the Commission determines after notice and comment should also be applicable to enti ties subject to this subsection.

(2) If an entity described in section 824(f) of this title voluntarily makes a short-term sale of electric energy through an organized market in which the rates for the sale are established by Commission-approved tariff (rather than by contract) and the sale violates the terms of the tariff or applicable Commission rules in effect at the time of the sale, the entity shall be subject to the refund authority of the Commission under this section with respect to the violation.

(3) This section shall not apply to--

(A) any entity that sells in total (including affiliates of the entity) less than 8,000,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year; or

(B) an electric cooperative.

(4)(A) The Commission shall have refund authority under paragraph (2) with respect to a voluntary short term sale of

electric energy by the Bonneville Power Administration only if the sale is at an unjust and unreasonable rate.

(B) The Commission may order a refund under subparagraph (A) only for short-term sales made by the Bonneville Power Administration at rates that are higher than the highest just and reasonable rate charged by any other entity for a short-term sale of electric energy in the same geographic market for the same, or most nearly comparable, period as the sale by the Bonneville Power Administration.

(C) In the case of any Federal power marketing agency or the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Commission shall not assert or exercise any regulatory authority or power under paragraph (2) other than the ordering of refunds to achieve a just and reasonable rate.

§ 825e. Complaints

Any person, electric utility, State, municipality, or State commission complaining of anything done or omitted to be done by any licensee, transmitting utility, or public utility in contravention of the provisions of this chapter may apply to the Commission by petition which shall briefly state the facts, whereupon a statement of the complaint thus made shall be forwarded by the Commission to such licensee, transmitting utility, or public utility, who shall be called upon to satisfy the complaint or to answer the same in writing within a reasonable time to be specified by the Commission. If such licensee, transmitting utility, or public utility shall not satisfy the complaint within the time specified or there shall appear to be any reasonable ground for investigating such complaint, it shall be the duty of the Commission to investigate the matters complained of in such manner and by such means as it shall find proper.

§ 825l. Review of Orders

* * *

(b) Judicial review

Any party to a proceeding under this chapter aggrieved by an order issued by the Commission in such proceeding may obtain a review of such order in the United States Court of Appeals for any circuit wherein the licensee or public utility to which the order relates is located or has its principal place of business, or in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, by filing in such court, within sixty days after the order of the Commission upon the application for rehearing, a written petition praying that the order of the Commission be modified or set aside in whole or in part. A copy of such petition shall forthwith be transmitted by the clerk of the court to any member of the Commission and thereupon the Commission shall file with the court the record upon which the order complained of was entered, as provided in section 2112 of Title 28. Upon the filing of such petition such court shall have jurisdiction, which upon the filing of the record with it shall be exclusive, to affirm, modify, or set aside such order in whole or in part. No objection to the order of the Commission shall be considered by the court unless such objection shall have been urged before the Commission in the application for rehearing unless there is reasonable ground for failure so to do. The finding of the Commission as to the facts, if supported by substantial evidence, shall be conclusive. If any party shall apply to the court for leave to adduce additional evidence, and shall show to the satisfaction of the court that such additional evidence is material and that there were reasonable grounds for failure to adduce such evidence in the proceedings before the Commission, the court may order such additional evidence to be taken before the Commission and to be adduced upon the hearing in such manner and upon such terms and conditions as to the court may seem proper.

The Commission may modify its findings as to the facts by reason of the additional evidence so taken, and it shall file with the court such modified or new findings which, if supported by substantial evidence, shall be conclusive, and its recommendation, if any, for the modification or setting aside of the original order. The judgment and decree of the court, affirming, modifying, or setting aside, in whole or in part, any such order of the Commission, shall be final, subject to review by the Supreme Court of the United States upon certiorari or certification as provided in section 1254 of Title 28.